United Nations A/55/PV.20

General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

20th plenary meeting
Monday, 18 September 2000, at 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable John Briceño, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment of Belize.

Mr. Briceño (Belize): On behalf of the Belize delegation, I extend my congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency. Your vast experience in international affairs will greatly aid in our deliberations during this fifth-fifth session of the Assembly. We are enriched by the presence of our newest Member, the Republic of Tuvalu; we welcome Tuvalu to our United Nations family with the assurance of Belize's cooperation and support.

The recently concluded Summit, which produced a progressive and far-reaching resolution, has set the pace for our deliberations during this general debate. Although the goals are ambitious, their achievement is crucial to the future of the United Nations. In his brief address to the Summit, my Prime Minister stated:

> "we are called to a new appointment with history: to bring democracy to global governance, to share a better and more productive future where all can live in dignity and peace." (*A/55/PV.3*)

Together with the goals put forward in the Declaration, this sets before us an agenda for our way forward.

In moving forward, we must begin by rededicating ourselves to upholding the fundamental principles of our Charter, principles which seek freedom from fear and want in a world where discrimination and hate are eradicated and the right of all people to live peaceful, quality lives is realized.

These ideas are as relevant today as they were 55 years ago. Despite the many advances we have made, many of us continue to allow our differences to lead to conflict, which results in overwhelming suffering and hinders human development. We must avoid these costly conflicts, for without peace we cannot grow.

At its inception, this institution recognized that peace and the elimination of war were essential to human development. Although we seem to have reduced the likelihood of another global conflagration, we continue, at the regional and local levels, to allow our differences to divide us, resulting in overwhelming suffering, which further hinders progress and development.

As a global institution, we must actively work to end all conflict. Our peacekeeping efforts must therefore be proactive and efficient. Our forces must protect innocent women and children; provide refuge to those who seek to promote principles of democracy; and rise up against rogue individuals and organizations that threaten to undermine democratic Governments. To achieve this, let us first commit ourselves to reinforcing the preventive capacity of the United Nations peacekeeping forces.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

00-64674 (E)

Belize regards peacekeeping operations as an important component of the United Nations. We agree that for our forces to be effective, they must be well equipped and capable of defending themselves. We continue to meet the financial commitments assigned to Belize based on the principle of capacity to pay. We welcome the recent Brahimi report, which is progressive and takes a comprehensive look at our peacekeeping efforts. My delegation supports the recommendations it advances.

Belize adheres to the principle of the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and in this spirit continues to work with Guatemala to arrive at a negotiated and peaceful resolution of our differences. Belize will comply with the recently agreed framework established through the Organization of American States.

For some time now, this institution has engaged in a conversation on development for the future and, more specifically, on globalization. For developing countries, globalization, as it exists today, poses serious concerns that seem to fall on the deaf ears of those who continue to push us along what is obviously a destructive path. While we welcome the promises of this new economic order, we continue to fear globalization in its current form, for what we have seen so far is neither responsible nor sustainable. It is not sustainable because those who lead the way seek only the advancement of their personal interests.

The proponents of globalization advised that market liberalization would lead to prosperity. We were encouraged to transform our economies and create more effective and efficient government. We have tried, and continue to try, to do so. However, our call for assistance with this transformation has not always been heard. However, much of what has been asked of most of us, we have done. The fact that today in Central America and the Caribbean every nation is legislated by a democratically elected Government and that we have opened our borders, markets and lifestyles to others, demonstrates our commitment to transparency and effective governance.

In Belize, we have done our part to ensure equitable development. We enjoy a vibrant and working democracy where 85 per cent of our voting population exercise their franchise to vote; we have an open economy where all are encouraged to participate; and we have formed partnerships with civil society to address social needs and protect our precious environment. We have been responsible, yet all we see of globalization is the threat of the elimination of our current economic sustenance. If this is the legacy of globalization, then those of us who have suffered at the hands of this new order must ask if globalization today is responsible, if it is good. We continue to believe that it can be.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

In the current economic order, small economies such as ours can aspire to a productive future only if the architects of this new modality provide us with the necessary assistance. Developed countries must commit themselves to a process of globalization that is not only free, but fair. Just as they request the opening up of our markets, such institutions and the administrators of globalization must be more open, democratic and representative. Thus, just as we work with civil society to help us to deal with our political and social needs, they must work together with the international civil agencies so that the needs of the poorest can be provided for. We will never achieve the objective of just world if poverty continues to affect our people. The eradication of poverty is our moral duty.

(*spoke in English*)

We agree that true sustainable development cannot occur without the protection and preservation of our environment. This must be a path that combines the efforts of all nations. We in Belize understand that we have a global responsibility to protect our natural resources. That is why we are signatories to the Framework Convention on Climate Change and are in the process of signing the Kyoto Protocol. However, our efforts can be effective only if others are equally committed. We encourage our developed partners to continue to honour the commitments they made in Rio to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a timely manner. Currently, over 40 per cent of Belizean land is under protected status, our precious coral reefs are closely monitored and our tropical rain forests carefully managed. Together with local non-governmental organizations, we are seeking an adequate balance between the protection of our natural resources and the fulfilment of the development needs of our people, while agreeing that our environmental protectionism must work in harmony with our developmental needs.

Much has been accomplished over the past year. On social issues, we reaffirmed our commitment to the development of women during the Beijing + 5 conference. The Copenhagen + 5 conference addressed the need for greater social development and, together with our partners in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Belize actively participated in the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

(NPT). Belize continues to push for an end to the shipping of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea.

These successes, however, should not distract us from the suffering and injustices still being endured by millions of people. In Africa the situation in Angola, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo concerns us. The spread of the HIV/AIDS virus is alarming; we must do what is necessary to assist those afflicted.

We are troubled by the situation in Timor. The recent events, which resulted in the death of United Nations peacekeeping personnel, were tragic. We also learned of the death of another United Nations official in Guinea. We condemn these acts, and join with the Secretary-General in expressing our condolences to the families of those who gave their lives for the cause of peace.

Belize joins others in support of the Middle East peace process. We continue to support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Likewise, we call upon this Organization to recognize the desire of the 23 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan for the opportunity to contribute and participate in the work of this Organization and other international bodies.

The Millennium Declaration, adopted by our heads of State and Government, reminds us of our responsibility to protect those fundamental values such as freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and responsibility. It calls for collective action to be undertaken by developed and developing nations to advance the cause of peace, protect our children and preserve the planet for future generations. These are goals that can be achieved through greater inclusion and genuine concern for each other. We must find new ways of thinking to help us reform these institutions, which create inequality and therefore divide us. Let us commit ourselves to reducing redundancy, eliminating waste and refining our responsiveness to Member needs, but let us do it quickly.

The United Nations is our truest form of global representation. It possesses the capacity to elicit the best from all of us. Together, our ability to accomplish these ideals set out in the Millennium Declaration is possible. Let us rededicate ourselves to its fulfilment.

The President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, His Excellency Mr. Seyoum Mesfin.

Mr. Mesfin (Ethiopia): Allow me, from the outset, to extend warm congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I would like also to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Minister Theo-Ben Gurirab, for the able manner with which he discharged his responsibilities as President of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

I wish also to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for all the efforts he has been making to make the United Nations equally relevant to all of us. I wish, in particular, to congratulate him on the success of the Millennium Summit, which we are hopeful will be a landmark for more meaningful and enhanced cooperation among nations.

We have indeed been encouraged by the well-deserved emphasis that was given to Africa and to Africa's predicament at the Millennium Summit. It is our hope that the Summit may have helped create greater determination for cooperation with the peoples of Africa so that Africa may make real progress in addressing the challenges of development, peace and stability.

The problems of Africa are defined by two very closely related challenges. Africa's development continues to be arrested by problems of insecurity, instability and lack of peace. On the other hand, it appears unrealistic to expect durable peace in Africa without hope in the future that could be brought about only by visible indications of possibilities for progress.

In both areas, Africa has not had the necessary support commensurate with the complexity of the challenges it has faced. It might be necessary to hasten to add here that indeed Africa itself might not always have taken advantage of available opportunities for making progress, and that we might sometimes have squandered real opportunities for breaking out of the vicious cycle of poverty and lack of peace and stability.

While this may be partly true, the significance of the missed chances that Africa has allowed to pass should not be exaggerated. It is far from the truth that Africa has enjoyed sustained, resolute and all-out support, either in the area of economic development or in the sphere of peace and security. On the other hand, it is precisely this type of cooperation that is required by many in Africa to be able to embark on sustainable

economic development and growth. But whether with respect to debt relief, or to declining terms of trade, or to all aspects of the challenges of and obstacles to development, the types of cooperation made available to our countries have always been limited as well as entangled with all kinds of conditions which have been far from helpful.

Like all regions of the world and like all countries, Africa and African nations should and must assume primary responsibility for what happens in Africa in general and in individual African countries. But at one time or another in their history, most regions of the world and most countries have had occasions to rely on international solidarity and cooperation as a catalyst for creating conditions for development and stability.

But Africa's fate has been different. For whatever reason, it has been easier to lose hope with respect to Africa than to give the continent the benefit of the doubt; this, even when little has been done to help Africa address the real challenges it is facing in a variety of areas.

This is not only in the area of economic development. We have seen the same thing taking place with respect to the need for Africa to promote respect for the rule of law and to create conditions for peace and stability. Africa is also being marginalized in terms of the universal applicability of the principles of international law. It is our hope that Africa will be judged by the same standard in this regard. Otherwise, there can be little chance for peace and stability in our continent.

We say this from experience. There is no effective substitute, if opportunities are to be created for the peaceful resolution of situations of crisis in Africa and for a quick and an appropriate response by the international community to violations of international law. Peace can never be promoted through appeasement of aggression or by creating the impression that, depending on circumstances, on where they take place and to whom they happen, some acts of aggression can be tolerated.

We in Ethiopia have, only a week ago, celebrated our New Year. We have entered the year 1993 with confidence that it will be a year of peace and progress. Our people have made the commitment to resume the task of economic development with full force, a task which was rudely interrupted two years ago when our country became a victim of aggression.

It is also in this spirit that we are proceeding with full commitment to put behind us the crisis we have had with Eritrea. Even before the deployment of peacekeepers, contrary to experience in other places, the cessation of hostilities has held for months now. We look forward both to the deployment of the peacekeepers and to a speedy conclusion of a comprehensive settlement. All those prepared to contribute to this effort should rest assured that what they should expect from Ethiopia, its people and their Government, is the fullest cooperation. For us, agreements concluded are made to be respected, not violated. In any case, what our people wish to be identified with, fully and with no ambiguity, is peacemaking, not war-making. We hope that we will have the opportunity to work for peace and for economic growth and development.

There are few who need the blessings of peace more than the people of Ethiopia and of our subregion. As much as our people refuse to see aggression rewarded at their expense, they have, on the other hand, never been wanting in demonstrating full commitment to peace and legality. Our people will never jettison this noble tradition.

Ethiopia also takes its responsibility for peace and stability in our subregion very seriously and in Africa as a whole. In this regard, we have been enormously encouraged by the developments with respect to the peace initiative on Somalia under the auspices of President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti.

It is Ethiopia's hope that what has already been achieved in Djibouti will be built upon and that the momentum for peace and national reconciliation will be maintained. We are convinced that if the remaining problems are handled with realism, wisdom and mutual accommodation, there is little doubt that the people of Somalia will very soon be able to put behind them the 10-year nightmare they have faced. I would like, therefore, to take this opportunity to call on all concerned to make this newly created opportunity for peace in Somalia, and for the restoration of the Somali State, irreversible. The process should not be allowed to be held hostage by those who may not be prepared for national reconciliation. Nor should it be endangered by a failure to be sufficiently accommodating and

sufficiently patient. This is what the international community should encourage.

The opportunity now created in Somalia should not be allowed to slip away. This could easily happen if all attention is focused on seeking international legitimacy rather than internal national reconciliation. It would indeed be a tragedy and a recipe for further bloodshed in Somalia if efforts are not made to build on the peace and stability that have already been achieved by some regions and parts of Somalia. The issue of Somaliland, for instance, requires great sensitivity and a sense of enormous responsibility. Whatever has been achieved in Djibouti is going to be tested by how well the peace and stability that some parts of Somalia have achieved is preserved.

For Ethiopia, and for Somalia's neighbours, these are critical issues. The formal stand we will be taking with respect to the evolving situation in Somalia will depend on how these issues are addressed by those who now have the chance to affect the destiny of the people of Somalia. While we wish them well and promise them our full cooperation, we also ask them to use this historic opportunity with a full sense of responsibility and wisdom.

Let me take this opportunity to also state that Ethiopia, along with its Inter-Government Authority on Development (IGAD) partners, will continue to do the maximum possible for peace and national reconciliation in the Sudan. It has always been our firm conviction that the Declaration of Principles provides a just and realistic basis for reaching a settlement on the crisis in southern Sudan. It is also our view that a broader national reconciliation in the Sudan can easily be achieved on the basis of democratic principles and mutual accommodation. Ethiopia will continue to be committed to peace in the Sudan on this basis and to cooperate with all those who have the goodwill to contribute to peace in our subregion.

Let me reiterate: Ethiopia will do the maximum possible for peace and durable stability in Africa as a whole, with the full knowledge that without peace we in Africa will have little chance to ensure a better future for our peoples.

Before concluding, I would like to say a few words on how vital it is that the reform of the Security Council be completed as speedily as possible. The reform of the Council is critical for the credibility of the United Nations and for its increased legitimacy. As matters stand now, it is only too obvious that not many believe that the work of the Security Council is conducted with sufficient transparency. In fact, there is a growing conviction that the Council is being less and less representative and more and more distant from the sentiments of the majority.

This situation, we believe, needs to be rectified. This can be done in two ways. First, by ensuring that there is equitable representation of all regions of the world on the Council. Secondly, it is also important that the work of the Council be made more open and its decision-making more transparent. The interests of peace and security will be better served if the Council is more transparent and more open to the views of others, most particularly to the views of those directly affected by its decisions.

It is our earnest hope that the United Nations will be more relevant to all in the twenty-first century, and in equal measure, than it has been in the past 55 years. This is not an unrealistic objective, but it requires the commitment of all, big and small.

The President: I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, His Excellency Mr. Igor Ivanov.

Mr. Ivanov (Russian Federation) *(spoke in Russian)*: The Millennium Summit has given all of us the priority task of establishing a new and equitable world order — an order which would meet the interests of all and every member of the international community and ensure adequate solutions to the problems with which the twenty-first century is confronting us.

I am convinced that in this era of globalization and enormous scientific and technological progress, humankind can and should have a comprehensive and forward-looking strategy. While in the past century human civilization's main task was that of survival, today we are confronted with significantly more difficult problems which are much more varied in terms of their scope and orientation.

The strategy of survival must give way to a strategy of sustainable development aimed at ensuring the prosperity of humankind. It must be based on the recognition of the indivisibility of international security, the use of modern scientific and technological achievements for the benefit of the entire international

community, and a gradual closing of the development gap between the various States.

These ambitious goals can be achieved only through the preservation and strengthening of strategic stability in its very broadest sense.

Strategic stability means further progress in the disarmament process, reliable prevention of the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Today nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are no longer the subject of exclusive interaction between Russia, the United States and other nuclear Powers. What is needed is the effective involvement of multilateral United Nations mechanisms and the entire world community in those processes.

The outcome of the Millennium Summit provides additional opportunities for the achievement of a major breakthrough in disarmament in the twenty-first century. This will require consistent joint efforts aimed at strict compliance with the agreements already concluded; a step-by-step reduction and eventual elimination of weapons of mass destruction under effective international control, and the limitation of other types of armaments; and prevention of the arms race in new spheres.

The time has come to give a new impetus to the work of the Conference on Disarmament, which has proved in practice the effectiveness of multilateral diplomacy under the auspices of the United Nations. Russia advocates the resumption of substantive work at that forum on major issues on the disarmament agenda.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) provides an indispensable international legal basis for nuclear disarmament. This has once again been reaffirmed in full by the 2000 Review Conference. Russia will work to ensure that the decisions of the Millennium Assembly promote the practical implementation of the agreements reached during that Conference. It is precisely for that purpose that the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, put forward an initiative on the development and implementation, under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), of an international project designed to phase out the use of enriched uranium and pure plutonium in the civilian nuclear energy sector.

We are satisfied to note the increasing number of States acceding to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Its speedy entry into force is in the interests of the entire international community. Having ratified the Treaty, we call on those that have yet not done so to follow suit.

We expect that the United States will follow Russia in completing ratification of the Treaty on the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START II), which will help make it operational. We are ready to actively continue the process of nuclear disarmament and to move towards the conclusion of a START III Treaty with an even lower threshold of nuclear warheads — down to 1,500 units. But this will be feasible only if the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty remains intact. It is universally acknowledged that this major Treaty concerns the vital security interests of the international community as a whole. Its preservation is a key element of global stability and a strong barrier to the arms race in regard to nuclear weapons, missiles and other weapons of mass destruction.

Russia will be introducing a draft resolution in support of the ABM Treaty. We hope that, as was the case last year, our initiative will receive broad support within the United Nations.

A peaceful earth needs a peaceful outer space. At the Millennium Summit the President of Russia proposed the convening in Moscow of an international conference on the prevention of the weaponization of outer space, to take place in the spring of 2001, when the fortieth anniversary of the first manned flight to outer space is to be commemorated. We hope that this proposal will be actively supported.

Strategic stability means reliable safeguarding of international information security and counteracting the use of scientific and technological achievements for purposes incompatible with universal progress and the maintenance of international peace. Aware of the great importance of resolving these most urgent issues, Russia will introduce for consideration by the General Assembly a draft resolution entitled "Developments in the field of informatization and telecommunications in the context of international information security".

Strategic stability also means enhancing peace and security on all continents, settling existing regional conflicts and preventing new ones and cutting off external support for them. Millions of people must be spared the death and suffering caused by local crises.

How can this goal be achieved? It is only through the joint efforts of all States collectively responsible for the world's destiny. Experience has shown that unilateral enforcement actions cannot guarantee a lasting and fair settlement of crisis situations.

The notions of sovereignty and the territorial integrity of States are still very much alive. Disregard for these principles and military intervention circumventing the Security Council, whatever humanitarian pretexts may be used, undermine the very foundations of the world order and pave the way for arbitrariness in international affairs.

The prevention and settlement of crises should become a key element of international security in the twenty-first century. When there is collective determination and goodwill, even the most complex and major problems lend themselves to a political resolution.

All of this calls for improvement of the peacekeeping potential of our Organization. People in "hotbeds" of the planet — from Africa and Lebanon to East Timor — rightly associate with the United Nations "Blue Helmets" their hopes for an end to bloody conflicts and for the beginning of complex reconciliation processes. They expect rapid and effective steps from us.

We hope that the Millennium Assembly will provide us with an opportunity to engage in a comprehensive analysis of the work of United Nations peacekeeping mechanisms and outline ways to increase their efficiency. Such is the objective of the report (A/55/305) prepared under the aegis of the Secretary-General by the Brahimi Panel. It is important to considerably enhance the United Nations capacity for the prompt deployment of peacekeeping operations. This can be done through the early completion of the system of standby arrangements. Peacekeeping units of the United Nations Secretariat need to be strengthened, with provision for professional planning, control and command of operations.

Russia consistently advocates the expansion of cooperation between the United Nations and regional structures in the field of peacekeeping. Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter remains the basis for such interaction. Any regional or "coalition" operation should be conducted under conditions of transparency and of reporting to the United Nations Security Council, whereas operations with enforcement elements should be carried out only with the authorization of the Security Council.

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is a major regional partner of the United Nations in peacekeeping. In many respects, it was the close cooperation between the United Nations and the CIS that made it possible to successfully resolve the conflict in Tajikistan. Such interaction will undoubtedly intensify along with the development of the CIS anti-crisis potential. At the same time, for a stable peace to prevail in the conflict-affected regions in the CIS area the volume of international economic and humanitarian aid for their rehabilitation should be increased.

Russia attaches primary importance to the expansion of cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional mechanisms in Africa to provide for more effective crisis response on the continent. This is evidenced by the Russian participation in peacekeeping operations in a number of African countries.

The entire experience of United Nations peacekeeping activities in recent years clearly shows the priority of political and diplomatic methods of conflict settlement. It is precisely these methods that make it possible to minimize the suffering of the civilian population and to find ways to a stable peace.

Strategic stability means the security and tranquillity of civil society and of the individual. This task can be accomplished only through the combined efforts of the international community to counter contemporary threats and challenges. These include, inter alia, aggressive separatism and religious extremism, illicit arms trafficking and organized crime.

Such an abhorrent manifestation of extremism as international terrorism poses a direct threat to security and stability. Today, terrorists of every stripe sometimes act in a more organized fashion than does the world community confronting them. We expect that the United Nations will step up its mobilization of international capacities to counteract terrorism. Such cooperation must be based on the clear principles set forth in the Security Council resolution 1269 (1999): no support whatsoever, no safe havens for terrorists, the inevitability of punishment for every terrorist act. As to those who violate these principles the Security Council must be ready to take measures against them provided for in the United Nations Charter.

Russia intends to ratify the Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Financing elaborated under United Nations auspices. There is an urgent need to complete work on the convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism, and that work on a comprehensive anti-terrorism convention should be stepped up.

Terrorism is often closely linked with drug trafficking and organized crime. We welcome the completion of the development of an international convention against organized crime. Russia intends to sign it in the nearest future. We also support the proposal on drafting an international convention on the fight against corruption.

Strategic stability means promoting human rights and freedoms everywhere. This area is an important component of the United Nations activities aimed at establishing a new world order based on international law.

Russia contributes significantly to strengthening the universal legal regime. Our country has signed the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Speaking of pooling the efforts of States to resolve the twofold task of maintaining international security and ensuring human security, human rights and freedoms, we should constantly bear in mind that in the twentieth century the rule of the ideology of racial hatred cost mankind scores of millions of human lives. Unfortunately, today, 55 years after the great victory it is still premature to speak of total eradication of the bacillus of national superiority.

We cannot accept a situation in which people do not have the right to use their mother tongue, are deprived of their citizenship and jobs on ethnic grounds, when fighters against fascism are put behind bars while former fascists find favour with the authorities. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights should firmly respond to all such manifestations.

Strategic stability must be based on a solid material foundation. The twenty-first century will go down in history as the century of mankind's breakthrough to a qualitatively new level of development only if we manage to preserve peace and international security and at the same time impart necessary dynamism and depth to the process of economic and technological equalization between the enormous number of developing countries and the comparatively small group of leading countries. This goal cannot be achieved overnight. This will require — under the unifying and guiding hand of the United Nations — a mechanism for collective democratic management of the international monetary, trade and economic systems. They must become more rational and fair and be targeted against poverty and underdevelopment.

It is important to make the most of those opportunities which have been opened up by the new technological revolution in order to initiate the process of bridging the gap in the levels of development. Information and communications technologies whose potential for speeding up global development is only comparable to the invention of written language can serve as a driving force of that process. A chance has emerged to skip over several traditional stages of development through the introduction of global computer literacy and information technologies. Mankind, equipped with this powerful instrument, will obtain a real opportunity to begin creating conditions for a decent life and the all-around development of human beings everywhere on earth.

Strategic stability means the preservation of a clean and healthy environment for the present and future generations. The United Nations has done a great deal to mobilize international efforts in that important field. The "Rio+10" Forum, to be held in 2002, will provide an opportunity not only to sum up the results of those activities but also to outline a future-oriented follow-up programme.

Russia supports the expansion of international cooperation within the United Nations framework in the areas of biodiversity, climate, combating desertification, as well as of forest preservation.

The recent increase over the last few years in the number of natural and man-made disasters and the consequent growth of the scope of human and material losses have made disaster management one of the most formidable global challenges facing mankind. While intensifying the United Nations efforts to promote international cooperation in this field, special attention must be paid to the use of state-of-the-art specialized technologies for disaster management and to the search for innovative mechanisms for their use in the interests of the entire international community.

The United Nations — a unique universal forum in every respect, which has demonstrated in practice its central role in managing international affairs — should become a guarantor of such comprehensive strategic stability. Russia welcomes the consensus reached at the Millennium Summit on consolidating the United Nations as the axis of the present world order. The time has come for concrete collective measures to transform the Organization into a sort of operational headquarters for coordinating activities aimed at ensuring a new strategic stability based on the principles of multilateralism, equality and solidarity in resolving global problems.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize once again that the Russian Federation, for its part, is open to the closest interaction with all members of the international community in order to make strategic stability a cornerstone of the world order in the twenty-first century and the United Nations its reliable guarantor.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Shlomo Ben-Ami, Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel.

Mr. Ben-Ami (Israel): I stand here today as Israel's messenger of peace. The establishment of the State of Israel was the fulfilment of the dream of a people forced into exile 2,000 years ago. The destruction of the Second Temple and the dissolution of Jewish statehood were the result of our failure as a nation to assume the proper political course, to opt for accommodation with reality instead of engaging in messianic hallucinations. Our punishment was very severe indeed, but maybe it can serve as a lesson to those nations and leaders who today may be tragically led to believe that the dangerous inertia of romantic mythology and unrealistic dreams is preferable to the banality of a wise and prudent political course.

Most revolts are uprisings against a system. Zionism was a revolt against destiny. It is this expression of our re-encounter with the world of political realities that eventually led us to the restoration of Jewish statehood in 1948. Tragically, however, historical and geopolitical circumstances have put us in a prolonged, bitter conflict with the Palestinian people.

It was thanks to the leadership of Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat that, seven years ago, Palestinians and Israelis were put on a track leading to peace and reconciliation. We have been engaged in the past seven years, but more intensely in the last year, in a major effort, unprecedented in both scope and depth, to resolve this 100-year-old conflict. This negotiating process, and it alone, should be the foundation of a peace agreement.

At this point, I would like to address my colleagues from the Arab and Muslim world. I hope that my words will convince them of the Israeli Government's sincere intentions to achieve a comprehensive peace based on respect, dignity and fairness, which will end the Middle East conflict and best serve the vital interests of the entire region.

The Jewish people have no quarrel with Islam. On the contrary, we have the deepest respect for that great Islamic civilization under whose wings Jewish history — from Al-Andalus to Turkey, from Egypt to Iraq, from the Jewish quarters of Tangier to Aleppo in Syria — has known some of its finest hours and most glorious cultural achievements. But even at the height of the "Golden Age", in the midst of the delights and wonders of Muslim Spain, our people never abandoned their dream of and yearning for Jerusalem, as expressed in the words of the poet Yehuda Halevi more than 800 years ago:

> "My heart is in the East, and I am in the furthest reaches of the West. To thee my soul yearns from the depth of the West."

We are a small nation decimated by holocaust and dispersion, but our heritage is rich. It was from our eternal capital, Jerusalem — which, according to a Muslim source,

> "in the days of the people of Israel, was an area larger than Cairo and Baghdad" —

that the message of monotheism was projected to humanity. The Jewish holy sites and shrines in Jerusalem are the very heart of the Jewish faith, identity and history. For the past 2,000 years, Jews have turned towards Temple Mount in prayer three times a day.

> "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I do not recall thee",

they pledged in joy and in sorrow.

For the past 30 years, Israel has consistently demonstrated its commitment to freedom of religion

and worship in Jerusalem. Heads of the various religious denominations in Jerusalem will attest to the fact that the city has never been so open to all believers. During the last month of Ramadan, a record number, unheard of in the annals of Islam in Jerusalem, of more than 400,000 Muslim worshippers attended Friday prayers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

I note this as an example of the deep respect which Israel has for Islam and its followers. Just as we do not question the sincerity of the sentiments of others towards their holy sites in Jerusalem, we expect that others will not question the Jewish people's deep, awe-inspired attachment to Jerusalem and its holy sites, from which we will never again be parted.

Politicians need not distort God's intentions for the sake of negotiations. How refreshing it is that a great number of Muslim scholars should attest to the fact that, as the Supreme Court Judge Mujir el-din al-Hanbali wrote in his *History of Jerusalem and Hebron*,

> "David reigned for 40 years and before he died he passed the monarchy on to his son Solomon and told him to build the *beit al-miqdas* — the Temple".

The expression *beit al-miqdas* — that is, the House of the Temple — became in many Muslim sources a synonym of the word "Jerusalem".

It is a travesty of historical truth to present the Palestinian refugee problem as the result of mass expulsion. There is no denying, however, that once the Jews — who for thousands of years waited with humility for their redemption — made their re-encounter with history as a sovereign nation, they had to assume the inherent immorality of war. The suffering of the civilian population will always be a burden on the conscience of any nation at war. The Arab-Israeli conflict has no monopoly on this maxim. Clearly, the Palestinian refugees were victims of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel, however, can assume neither political nor moral responsibility for this tragedy that was the direct result of the all-out onslaught against reborn Israel — an onslaught launched by the Arab armies in 1948. The Palestinian refugee problem was born as the land was bisected by the sword — not by design, Jewish or Arab. The problem was largely the inevitable by-product of Arab and Jewish fears and the protracted bitter fighting.

We believe that, once established, it is the Palestinian State that should provide for the vindication of the Palestinian claim for the right of return. The notion is preposterous that a nation should create a State only in order to gather its exiles in a neighbouring State. Israel, however, has expressed its willingness to actively participate in any international effort and fund aimed at providing the financial foundations for the resolution of the refugee problem. Out of humanitarian considerations, Israel may also accept a small and limited number of refugees within a scheme of family reunification.

Let there be no doubt. The peace process is not the objective, we need not sanctify the process. Peace, not the process, is the objective. Peace is not about more conventions, summits and resolutions; it is about the future of our children, and about the seemingly unattractive banalities of building the mechanisms of cohabitation.

To the Palestinians we say: we need to disentangle ourselves from this seemingly insoluble conundrum. We know that unless your and our wounds are healed, peace — not only the political peace but also that of the mind and the conscience — will not be complete. Yet, at the same time we realize that the total satisfaction of our respective dreams or presumed rights will lead us to perdition. Hence it is incumbent on us to devise realistic ways to heal without opening new wounds, to dignify our existence as free peoples without putting into jeopardy the collective existence of each other. Peace is not about twisting each other's arms; it is about defining a common interest. I believe that such an ideal compromise is not impossible to achieve, while banishing the sword from this land of God.

Peace has not materialized in full yet, but I believe that we are moving in the right direction. In the past year the Government of Prime Minister Ehud Barak has made bold, courageous and unprecedented moves towards peace. At Camp David we have contemplated ideas and explored concepts relating to the most sensitive and supposedly intractable issues. Our sense is that breakthrough is possible, just as failure may lead to breakdown. We have turned the sea that separated us into a river. But, do we have the courage and the determination to cross it?

I know I may not sound too objective by vouching for Prime Minister Barak. But, I have come

here with the power of conviction that no Prime Minister before him — and let no illusions be harboured, no Prime Minister after him — will touch as he has the outer limits of his options as an Israeli and a Jew.

I do not underestimate the dilemmas facing Chairman Arafat. He is the great leader of the Palestinian people, and I know that the decision is not easy for him either. But this is the destiny of leaders: to always be prophets without honour. They should not expect the applause of their constituencies, what really matters is the judgement of future generations. I call upon our Palestinian partners to realize that history has brought us to a moment of truth and decision from which we are not allowed to escape empty-handed without inflicting severe punishments on our own peoples.

Israel aspires to achieve a comprehensive peace in the region and help move it into the future. Twenty one years ago we signed a cornerstone peace treaty with Egypt, followed by a peace treaty with Jordan and an incipient but promising process of normalization with the Maghreb and Gulf States. Eighteen years of Israeli military presence in Lebanon have been terminated by the Barak Government, in close cooperation with the United Nations, and thanks especially to the efforts and dedication of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. We have also delved into the possibilities of reaching peace with Syria. We hope that talks with Syria will resume as soon as possible and that a fair and equitable agreement can be achieved.

Israel is determined to pursue peace and take the calculated risks attached to it. But Israel will not compromise — not now and not ever — on those security and national interests that we deem vital. While building our peace with the Palestinians we cannot ignore security concerns inherent in the fact that peace with the Palestinians is not our last peace. We still have a dispute pending with Syria, and we are still exposed to the most serious regional threats emanating from revolutionary powers in the area.

Peace requires the active involvement of the international community. The critical role played by the United States, and especially the relentless dedication and unequivocal commitment of President Bill Clinton, has been massive and constructive. Once again the United States has proven to be the indispensable nation. We have also seen the European Union rising to the task, and we commend the role of the French Presidency and that of other key European Governments. Peace needs the advice of the international community and it will need that support to cement peace once it is achieved.

We expect also to work closely with the Egyptian Government for the cause of regional peace. I believe that it is also important that Russia and the Arab world express their opinions that now is the time to make historical decisions. Time is an elusive and perishable commodity. We are all running out of it.

We are open to developing wide spaces of cooperation with our Palestinian neighbours and indeed with all the countries of the Middle East, with dignity and mutuality. But, we do not intend to impose our experience on anybody, nor is it our intention to assert our economic or technological presence amidst those of our neighbours who do not want it. The leaders and the elites throughout the Middle East do not need our advice to know what are the real challenges ahead of us all: modernizing the economy and combating disease, hunger, poverty and illiteracy. Indeed, small islands of excellence notwithstanding, the Middle East is in grave danger of being on the wrong side of the digital divide.

In his inaugural speech in 1961, the late President Kennedy invited his generation to join him in a struggle:

> "Now the trumpet summons us again — not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need; not as a call to battle, though embattled we are — but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, ... a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself."

Nothing will make us happier than joining hands with our Arab neighbours with dignity and mutuality in this most noble of struggles.

The Middle East is not tranquil yet. It is still replete with armed conflicts, political hostilities and animosities. Israel believes that regional arrangements are crucial for arms control. A step-by-step approach, commensurate with progress towards comprehensive peace, is the right approach.

We are concerned by the expanding stockpiles of conventional weapons in the region, as well as by attempts made by Iran and Iraq to acquire and develop

non-conventional weapons, and by an increasing missile threat.

Israel attaches great importance to the eventual establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the region. In order to reach that goal, direct negotiations between all States of the region must be held.

Last year saw a turnaround in Israel's relations with the United Nations. After years of anomaly, Israel was temporarily admitted to the Western European and Other Group (WEOG) in New York. We hope that Israel's admission to the Western Group in international organizations based outside New York will soon be secured.

The United Nations, and indeed most of its Member States, played a major role in demanding that Iran treat fairly the 13 Jews falsely accused, convicted and sentenced for ludicrous charges of espionage. It is in such instances that the international community has the opportunity to express its discontent and exert pressure on countries that break the norms of behaviour.

On the issue of the reform of the Security Council, is our opinion that the Security Council should faithfully reflect the present geopolitical picture, a picture that has changed beyond recognition since the last enlargement of the Council in 1965. We subscribe to the view that the right of veto — a safety net against the possible arbitrariness of the General Assembly — should remain in the hands of a limited number of States.

Allow me a final reflection on the Israeli-Palestinian dilemma.

The tragedy of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict stemmed from discrepant historical rhythms. The history of our modern national movement has been characterized by realistic responses to objective historical conditions. The Palestinians have consistently fought for the solutions of yesterday — those they had rejected a generation or two earlier. This persistent attempt to turn back the clock of history lies at the root of many of the misfortunes that have befallen the peoples of the region. Now it is time for all of us to overcome dire memories and look forward. Neither the physical nor the rhetorical war of images will bring us any closer to peace and reconciliation. No one has a monopoly on the mythology of suffering and atrocities. In this tragic dispute we have all committed acts of violence that we ought not to be proud of. To the Palestinians we say, we are excited by the prospects to overcome the troubled history of our relations in order to shape our dreams of peace. Let us then join hands in asking the world, which has been watching, perplexed at, and sometimes even fuelling our wars, to mobilize its resources for the benefit of our peoples. And, let us be full partners in this international effort to lay down the foundations of the Middle East of the future. The creative energies of our peoples should at long last be put to work in the service of peace, for as the wisest of kings, King Solomon, the builder of the Temple in Jerusalem, wrote thousands of years ago, there is:

> "A time for slaying and a time for healing ... a time for war and a time for peace". (*The Holy Bible, Ecclesiastes 3:3-8*)

The President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Abdul Sattar.

Mr. Sattar (Pakistan): Mr. President, it gives me great pleasure to join preceding speakers in offering you the Pakistan delegation's warm felicitations on your election. We pledge to you our wholehearted cooperation in your efforts dedicated to the success of this historic fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to the leadership of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. His commitment and dynamism have reinforced the rightful role of the United Nations in addressing the challenges of our times.

The millennial transition is unique in the lives of those fortunate to witness it. We are fortunate, too, that we start this session in the glow of the Millennium Summit. We shall be inspired in our work by the ringing commitment of our leaders to values and principles fundamental to the maintenance of peace and security; b the resolve of our leaders to free peoples from the scourge of war, on the one hand, and to free humanity from dehumanizing poverty, on the other. Their determination to protect the environment, promote human rights, democracy and good governance, and to meet the special needs of Africa, will be our guide and mandate in our deliberations.

It will be our duty at this and future sessions of the General Assembly, to translate the Millennium

Declaration into action. This is no doubt a difficult challenge. But it is a challenge we must meet. Only thus can we contribute to the building of a future better than the past.

To all these ends — at once necessary as well as noble — our leaders pledged to spare no efforts to make the United Nations a more effective instrument of international cooperation.

What is needed, if I may borrow an apt phrase from the Secretary General's report, is a stronger commitment to action — action to achieve peace, and action to achieve development.

Each of our States can and must take action on both fronts. But individual efforts cannot achieve optimum results. All of us need to work with dedication and a strong sense of commitment in a cooperative and harmonious environment to promote the twin objectives for a better future.

The Millennium Declaration emphasizes the determination of world leaders to save peoples from the scourge of war. Also the Secretary General's report highlights peace and security as:

> "a central objective of the United Nations at the dawn of the twenty-first century, as it was when the Organization was founded over half a century ago". (*A/55/1, para. 29*)

The problem is how to prevent war and achieve peace. The solution is not difficult to find. What is needed is a stronger commitment to action. Given that commitment, crises and conflicts can be prevented and peace can be achieved. Peace not merely possible; it is realizable through a civilized approach to conflict resolution based on justice and international law and the principles of the Charter, the United Nations can ensure effective remedial action to maintain peace and security.

People watched with relief as the world community joined together to prevent genocide in Bosnia and Kosovo. With the commendable cooperation of the Government of Indonesia and the imaginative contribution of the Secretary-General, we approached the situation in East Timor in a similar way. The imaginative and diligent efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Jamsheed Marker, to promote the settlement in East Timor are a matter of pride for the people of Pakistan. These are all examples of how the United Nations and the international community can and should act to address conflicts by implementing its principles and decisions.

In the Middle East, too, the peace process has made steady, if agonizingly slow, progress. For the gains so far made, tribute is due to the idealistic efforts of the peacemakers and the realistic approach of the Palestinian and Israeli leaders. The residual issues are difficult and delicate, involving as they do principles of law and equity on the one hand, and deep emotions on the other. Yet we ardently hope that the peace process will succeed soon. Final settlement of the Palestinian question will be a crowning achievement and a momentous contribution to peace in the Middle East.

Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1977) are imbued with an irreplaceable international sanctity. Their implementation involves the prestige and credibility of the United Nations. An end to occupation and the reversion of holy Jerusalem to Palestinian sovereignty will ensure reconciliation and durable peace in the Middle East.

The Kashmir question, involving the life and future of the people of the State, has been the root cause of tensions in South Asia since 1947. Its settlement is an indispensable condition for peace and stability. The ten million people of that State will not be denied their right to freedom. They seek nothing more than the fulfilment of the commitments contained in the resolutions of the Security Council. Their right to decide their own future cannot lapse. The passage of 53 years has only compounded the tragedy of the Kashmiri people and prolonged their travail. The long delay has only heightened the terrible dangers inherent in the festering dispute.

According to the All Parties Freedom Conference, 72,000 Kashmiris have been killed since 1989. Thousands more have been tortured and maimed or have disappeared. The massive human rights violations in Kashmir, and the repression and brutality perpetrated on the Kashmiri people by occupation forces, are a grave crime of State terrorism.

In a desperate attempt to undermine and suppress the Kashmiri Freedom Movement, the perpetrators of repression and violence against the Kashmiri people have tried to portray the freedom struggle as terrorism. Such propaganda did not carry credibility in the past and it cannot do so now. It is familiar to all those who

have won freedom after protracted struggles against colonialism and foreign occupation.

Pakistan has consistently vowed to seek a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir dispute. Two years ago, the Security Council once again emphasized the need to resolve the dispute, which has been the source of tension and conflict in the region. The provisions of Article 33 of the Charter place an obligation on Member States to settle disputes through recourse to negotiation, inquiry, conciliation, mediation, arbitration or adjudication. Each and every one of these means is acceptable to Pakistan. Faced with the intransigent rejection of peaceful means, the Security Council has a responsibility to act. The Charter empowers the Security Council to do so. What is needed is a stronger commitment to action. In its absence, mere talk of crisis prevention and dispute resolution will lack credibility.

Afghanistan remains trapped in a terrible tragedy. Its protracted war of liberation in the 1980s left it devastated. The internecine war in the 1990s has inflicted further ravages. The economy of the country is in shambles. Drought in southern Afghanistan this past year has added to the misery of the people of this ancient land.

Tied to the Afghan people by bonds of geography, history and culture, the people of Pakistan view the tragedy in Afghanistan with a deep sense of sympathy. Despite economic stringency, we continue to provide shelter to 1.5 million Afghan refugees. The interruption of the food supply from, or via, Pakistan would further aggravate hardship and trigger a fresh influx. That is why Pakistan is opposed to sanctions that hurt people.

No people except the Afghan people themselves have suffered more from the conflict and instability in Afghanistan than the people of Pakistan. It is natural therefore that Pakistan should support all efforts for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. We were encouraged to note a similarity of approaches by the Foreign Ministers of the six contiguous countries, the Russian Federation and the United States at the "Six-plus-Two" group meeting convened on 15 September by the Secretary-General. Pooling our resources and influence, we should make more energetic efforts to persuade the Afghan parties and assist the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his efforts to promote a broad-based Government acceptable to the Afghan political parties and ethnic groups.

We support the Islamic Republic of Iran as it leads a parallel effort for peace in Afghanistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). We also appreciate the efforts recently undertaken by Turkmenistan. In our view, all these efforts complement and reinforce each other.

In his report on the work of the Organization (A/55/1), the Secretary-General referred to the influx of war materiel to Afghanistan from outside. Pakistan urges not only a ceasefire but also a ban on the supply of military equipment to the Afghan parties and the establishment of a monitoring mechanism for its enforcement. We also remain cognizant of the imperative of respect for sovereignty. The Afghan people have a history of fierce resistance against outside interference. Engagement with the Afghan Government offers better hope for amelioration than attempts to drive it into a corner and isolate it. The United Nations has been providing humanitarian relief in Afghanistan. Programmes aimed at rehabilitation and reconstruction may help bring the country back into the international mainstream sooner. That is also the more compassionate way.

Pakistan, itself a victim of terrorism, condemns that evil in all its forms and manifestations, whether committed by individuals, groups or States. Our Government has ratified nine international conventions against terrorism and we join all international efforts to combat this menace.

Pakistan has historically supported all proposals and agreements aimed at the limitation, progressive reduction and eventual elimination of weapons of mass destruction. For over a quarter of a century we made efforts and initiated proposals to keep our area free of nuclear weapons. Also, Pakistan has been prepared to support universal and non-discriminatory measures and proposals. Pakistan voted in favour of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996 and intended to sign it along with all others, especially the designated States. The process of bringing that Treaty into force was derailed due to events not of our own making. Even then, Pakistan was not the first to conduct tests in 1998. Pakistan will not be the first to resume them. We still hope the Treaty can be brought into force. Pakistan will not obstruct the realization of that aim. Our Government continues efforts to build domestic consensus in favour of signing the Treaty.

Meanwhile, restraint and responsibility remain the guiding principles of our nuclear policy. Pakistan will not enter into any nuclear arms race. Our sole aim is to retain minimum credible deterrence. I wish to reaffirm in this Assembly that our nuclear capability is only meant to deter aggression against Pakistan; it poses no threat to any country.

We support efforts aimed at the prevention of the vertical or horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. During the past year we have further strengthened domestic regulations against export of nuclear equipment or materials. Our power reactors are under international safeguards.

Pakistan is prepared to cooperate in efforts to introduce restraints on the development, production and deployment of ballistic missiles. To be successful, however, such efforts must be non-discriminatory. Their aim must be stabilization of the situation.

Any use of nuclear weapons is inconceivable. However, the Charter obliges Members to refrain from the threat or the use of any force. The world community should, therefore, emphasize no-first-use of force, nuclear or conventional.

At the global level, Pakistan supports calls for the continued observance of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. The militarization of outer space would be a disservice to hopes for the maintenance of existing restraint and stability.

Pakistan will participate in negotiations on the proposed fissile material cut-off treaty and make a positive contribution to evolving a fair and an equitable text that all countries can support.

In his address to the Millennium Summit, the Chief Executive of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, stated:

> "The best assurance for the consolidation of global peace lies in the economic development and prosperity of all regions and all peoples. Economic progress in one region supports and complements prosperity in the other." (*A/55/PV.4*)

Development is not a zero-sum game. Accordingly, the Millennium Declaration commits world leaders to

> "making the right to development a reality for everyone" *(resolution 55/2, para. 11)* and freeing the entire human race from want.

Globalization raised hopes, as it offered opportunities for faster economic growth, higher living standards and accelerated benefits from the flow of knowledge and technology. But there have been disappointments. Experience has shown that the benefits of globalization have been uneven and that the number of people living in poverty has actually increased. Technological and information revolutions have accentuated global inequality, and a new digital divide has led to the marginalization of a large number of developing countries.

Global trade regimes benefit the rich, and the South has become poorer. Competition, standards, a variety of non-tariff barriers, increasingly complex trading practices, protectionism in selected sectors such as agriculture, and restrictions on technology transfers all militate against the interests of the developing countries. They find it hard to secure adequate returns for their products or to attract investment to improve their competitiveness. As a result, economic disparities are widening. This belies the promise of free markets to ensure the well-being of all.

The failure of the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle last November and dissenting voices heard in Washington last April make it clear that the international economic system needs to be fixed. Concerted global action is required for sustained development to benefit and protect weaker economies. The industrialized countries have a special responsibility to adopt bold initiatives. Professions of a desire for the eradication of poverty must first lead to the establishment of an international economic policy framework responsive to the needs of the developing countries.

One important area is the debt issue. In one of the interactive dialogues the Secretary-General proposed that the United Nations could mediate between creditors and debtors to address the debt problem. We welcome this proposal. Our Chief Executive, speaking at the same meeting, suggested that developing indebted countries should be allowed to utilize resources allocated to debt servicing for the development of the social sector, especially education and health care. Substantive debt relief through innovative approaches will go a long way to help developing countries ensure global harmony and regenerate a new economic partnership between the North and the South.

A holistic approach to deal with problems of development and poverty eradication is necessary. While we welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to bridge the digital divide, the emphasis must remain on addressing mass literacy, capacity-building, infrastructure and basic health facilities. Similarly, multilateral trade regimes should be development-oriented. Environmental concerns about the prudent use of natural resources must be pursued simultaneously with emphasis on sustained economic growth in the South.

The High-level International Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development, which will be held next year, must involve the world's finance, trade and development organizations in discussing the issues comprehensively. The conference should promote good governance at the international level. It must address how we can manage globalization appropriately so that its benefits reach everyone, ensuring universal prosperity.

The upsurge of democracy in the past decade has been a good omen for the start of the new millennium. This salutary trend can only be sustained through equitable economic development. Unless the developing nations are able to have a fair share in rising levels of global prosperity, the advocacy of democratic values and human and social standards will remain hollow.

In Pakistan we are addressing the challenges of both economic revival and institutional reforms that emphasize accountability, good governance and the devolution of power to grass-roots levels political institutions. In this endeavour, the Government is banking on the support and enthusiasm of our people. We believe that democracy is, first and foremost, empowerment of the people, based on strong institutions.

The world community is well aware of the ravages inflicted on fragile economies of developing countries and their poor people as a result of corruption and the transfer of illegal funds to safe havens abroad. They are often the worst victims of such malpractice due to socio-economic forces within and banking practices outside their countries.

The welfare of humanity in developing countries demands international cooperation for the prevention of corruption. Such cooperation was urged in resolutions 53/176 of 15 December 1998 and 54/205 of 22 December 1999. The South Summit, held in Havana in April 2000, also requested remedial action.

Transfers of illicit funds from developing countries will not make the rich countries much richer, but they will make the poor countries poorer. It is a paradox that some rich countries have such lax laws that they provide safe havens and encourage private banks to launder illicit funds looted by corrupt persons from poor countries by facilitating the establishment of secret accounts. That is tantamount to the encouragement of plunder, indeed, of financial terrorism.

The nexus between corruption and the failure of democracy was recognized also in the Final Declaration issued by the meeting of the Community of Democracies in Warsaw, held from 25 to 27 June 2000. It emphasized the need to combat corruption, which corrodes democracy. We need, therefore, to take effective action. We propose that the General Assembly should proclaim a policy of zero tolerance of all types of corruption and urge a ban on the laundering of illicit funds.

The United Nations has emerged as the only forum with the universal recognition and authority to address the entire spectrum of issues relating to human aspirations for peace, justice and development. To meet these growing expectations, this world body must be strengthened. Its role must be reinforced in order to ensure a better future for the world.

We support the call for enhancing the capacity of the United Nations in the areas of conflict prevention and peacekeeping. In this regard, we commend Mr. Brahimi and members of the high-level Panel for their extensive report. As an important participant in United Nations peace-keeping operations, we in Pakistan look forward to discussions on the useful ideas and concepts that have been presented in the report to enable the United Nations to respond more effectively to existing and incipient conflicts and threats to international peace and security.

No other aspect of reform of the United Nations merits as close attention as the need to make the Security Council more democratic, transparent and accountable. Periodic elections of a larger number of members will make the Security Council not only more representative but also more responsive to the aspirations of the world community. That will enhance the capacity of this vital organ to contribute to the

maintenance of international peace and security and to the realization of the purposes of the Organization. That objective will not be achieved by the creation of new centres of privilege which detract from the cardinal principle of the sovereign equality of States. For the same reason, the decision-making process needs to be made more democratic.

For the Security Council to command universal respect, its reform should have the general agreement of the membership. Nothing should be done in haste or in a manner that divides the membership or impairs the authority and prestige of the Council.

In this increasingly interactive world, we share with other nations the desire for a peaceful environment and mutually beneficial cooperation, and we see a pivotal role for the United Nations. The universality of the United Nations gives it a stature and legitimacy that is unprecedented in history. The Organization should begin the twenty-first century by demonstrating a clear commitment to addressing and resolving the key development and security challenges facing our peoples. It must be enabled to apply its immutable principles and its decisions consistently and forcefully to ensure durable peace, sustained economic progress and a better future for all humanity.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. James Victor Gbeho, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana.

Mr. Gbeho (Ghana): On behalf of my delegation, Sir, I wish to congratulate you sincerely on your election as President of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. This session is indeed historic, coming as it does in the wake of a Millennium Summit that witnessed the presence of the largest-ever gathering of political leaders of the international community. I also wish to commend the other members of the Bureau on their election.

May I also take this opportunity to pay a richly deserved tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Foreign Minister of Namibia, whose deep sense of duty and commitment to social justice helped shape the United Nations agenda for the new century. Indeed, the General Assembly gave impetus to such an agenda when, in December 1998, it decided to hold the Millennium events, believing strongly that the turn of the century was a unique and symbolically compelling moment to articulate and affirm an animating vision for the United Nations in the new era.

Barely a fortnight ago, world leaders met here in New York, following that commitment, to address the challenges of the new century, reaffirm their commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and to demonstrate political will for the new process. The message that emerged from the statements made by the heads of State or Government at the Millennium Summit was the reaffirmation of the unique role of the United Nations in offering the best, and only, universal framework for confronting the challenges of the millennium.

It recognized a United Nations capable of promoting a new development agenda that is people-oriented and which also guarantees greater participation of stakeholders, particularly women, the youth, the private sector and civil society at large; a United Nations that has been revitalized to play a more meaningful role in helping developing countries meet the challenges of poverty reduction, political pluralism and the ongoing process of globalization; a United Nations that boldly plays its role as an Organization working for the good of all, with the confidence of the world's people.

The conjunction of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly and the beginning of a new millennium provides a symbolic departure point for the international community to seek to do better in all areas of its endeavour. Today, there is no greater challenge facing our world and no greater issue defining this millennium than the debilitating inhumanity of poverty, its heavy hand on wealth creation, its fast spread across the world, the deadly effect of economic insecurity on peace and security and its impact on the environment. It is thus perplexing that under the effect of globalization, deprivation and inequality are accelerating globally with as much speed as innovation, technological progress and integration, although in different directions. Our collective ingenuity, that of both developed and developing, is called upon to produce answers that will bring us closer than ever before to the purposes of the Charter.

We have encountered disappointments as the international community has striven for peace, security, development and respect for human rights. We have also sought ways of dealing with the impact of globalization on international trade and investment. We should not resign ourselves to these reversals, nor should we accept living with them. To do so would defeat the objective of development. The way forward

is not only to revitalize the United Nations to enable it to strive more boldly for a more equitable global society, but also to work together to ensure that equity, fairness and solidarity characterize international relations.

On the important question of maintaining international peace and security, the role of the United Nations has been, without doubt, that of facilitating conditions under which countries and peoples may live together securely and harmoniously in order to give free rein to their creative talents. One important means of achieving this objective in the midst of violent conflicts that keep erupting has been to undertake peacekeeping all over the world. Ghana has been and will continue to be a major contributor to this effort, as conflicts in Africa especially pose a major challenge to the United Nations efforts to bring about global peace and prosperity.

The situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, to name only two examples, amply demonstrate the complexities of the challenges which the United Nations must show it can handle. In the West African subregion, for example, we must all cooperate in imposing a ban on the purchase of small arms and especially on the purchase of diamonds that are not controlled by the Certificate of Origin regime from countries in conflict. Unless the international community helps by implementing this aspect of Security Council resolutions, international peace and security will continue to be prejudiced by the greed and ambition of individuals.

Enhancing Africa's peacekeeping capacity to cope with challenging missions, through training, logistics and financial support, as well as a stronger partnership between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, is a crucial goal if we are to return the continent to peace and security. That is one of the reasons why Ghana attaches importance to regional and subregional peacekeeping initiatives. However, such initiatives should not become an excuse for the United Nations or the Security Council to shirk their primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security in Africa.

Disarmament lies at the heart of the United Nations efforts to ensure and sustain international peace and security, conditions necessary for all productive human activity. The nuclear threat of the cold-war era still looms large over all of us and will continue to do so until the nuclear Powers and militarily significant countries disarm. It is therefore reassuring that, despite the gloom that has beclouded the United Nations disarmament machinery over past years, positive results were achieved at the Sixth Review Conference of the State Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The United Nations must capitalize on this momentum and continue its search for new ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament and arms non-proliferation. It must also embark on confidence-building measures in order to enhance the process. In this regard, the Disarmament Commission and other relevant machinery on disarmament established by the General Assembly should be given every opportunity to fulfil their mandates through the demonstration by Member States of commitment, flexibility and the necessary political will.

Ghana would therefore use this opportunity to reiterate its support for the proposal by the Secretary-General of convening a major international conference on the nuclear threat. We will also play an active part in the preparatory process leading to the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, to be held in 2001.

Ghana believes that the efforts of the United Nations to promote and maintain international peace and security should rest on a firm international legal framework, hence the need to maintain support for the useful work being done by the International Law Commission and related institutions in the United Nations system. We believe that the tremendous progress made in the establishment of legal frameworks for the pursuit of crimes against humanity, for example, must continue if our societies are to be maintained.

In the particular case of Africa, support for the International Criminal Court is not only desirable; it is a must, since censure by the international community is now very necessary in dissuading warlords and rebels from committing the heinous crimes that we continue to witness in countries such as Sierra Leone, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Ghana recommends, therefore, that international law should

ensure that the perpetrators of such crimes are punished and that they do not enjoy amnesty from any country.

The spirit of compromise which led to the overwhelming endorsement of the Rome Treaty establishing the International Criminal Court, must be kept alive to achieve our objectives in this field.

The situation in the Middle East continues to engage the serious attention of us all. Ghana acknowledges the current propitious climate in the Middle East as a result of the revival of contacts between Israel and the Palestinian Authority at the highest levels. The withdrawal of Israeli Defence Forces from Southern Lebanon has given these talks a sense of optimism, and so have the meetings between Chairman Arafat and Mr. Ehud Barak. While we commend President Clinton's efforts, the two leaders of the Middle East are urged to show flexibility and stay the course, as the obstacles to peace cannot be removed without compromise, painful sacrifices, diplomacy and a strong desire for durable peace. Both sides should remember that this is perhaps the finest hour for reaching agreement. The negative forces in Israel, especially, are regrouping, while the younger generation in Palestine are growing more and more impatient. No sacrifice should therefore be too great for success.

Ms. Brizuela de Ávila (El Salvador), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In this new era we must have the boldness to end attitudes and situations that are no longer helpful to the process of globalization. In spite of the regular acknowledgement by world leaders and other influential policy makers of the need for poverty alleviation, those in a position to do so have failed to offer credible arrangements for debt relief, market access and financing for development which would go a long way in enabling developing countries to build viable socio-economic systems capable of overcoming the fragmentation and marginalization being suffered as a result of globalization. On the contrary, they are using their pre-eminent political and economic positions to try to control and manipulate developing countries, especially countries whose Governments they do not support.

It seems to me that the world community is yet to translate the traditional parochial affirmation of the need for equity, fairness and solidarity for national development into concrete international actions. Furthermore, the United Nations will be able to teach lessons of equality and justice to its members only when it practises those norms itself.

At the end of the cold war the peoples of the world heard a lot about the peace dividend. Only a decade after this new concept was trumpeted from the rooftops, it has turned out to be non-existent. But that concept can be real if the tenor of our negotiations reflects an awareness of our common humanity and its highest values rather than the diplomatic stock-in-trade of an era shaped by competitive warfare and an unequal advantage of the rich and powerful over the poor and militarily insignificant countries. International cooperation for development must replace inequity and war.

Transforming the context of international cooperation for development depends as much on the level of commitment of individuals and groups in our respective countries as it does on what we do as political leaders and policy makers. In this connection, reinforcing and enhancing the network of linkages between the United Nations and civil society is a fundamental necessity. Unless our actions reflect this strategic understanding of the nature of decision-making in the world today, we are unlikely to benefit from the mistakes of our past efforts.

We accordingly urge the Secretary-General to examine ways of ensuring common, acceptable standards for accountability and transparency, even in the operations of non-governmental organizations with respect to their participation in the United Nations. In addition, a greater effort should be made to build the capacity of non-governmental organizations in developing countries so that non-governmental organization participation in the United Nations could reflect the diversity of interests across the world.

Ghana welcomes the contribution of non-governmental organizations to the work of the United Nations and individual countries, but must at the same time caution against replacing the genuine and democratic voice of a people with those of externally controlled non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Non-governmental organizations and the private sector are vital agents of change in developing countries, but they should not replace the voice of a people, if democracy is to retain credibility.

In an age of globalization and of our increasingly knowledge-based society, we feel that the United

Nations has a major responsibility to support the development efforts of the developing countries, and that the international community should provide the necessary resources for it to do so. We therefore call once again on all Member States to fulfil their financial obligations under the Charter in full and on time.

The challenges facing the international community, such as the growing income and technology gaps between the North and the South, poverty and deprivation, point to the need for stronger cooperation between the developed and developing countries. A concerted effort will be required to promote a systematic dialogue between the two groups to find solutions to these problems.

It must be the vocation — indeed, the commitment — of the North-South partnership to ensure that in the new millennium governance, nationally and globally, rests on the recognition that the wealth of some must not lead to the impoverishment of others, and that every person on this earth must have access to certain basic social services, such as health care, education, food and safe water, no matter which corner of the earth he or she inhabits. Thus the rich countries have an indispensable role to play by further opening their markets, by providing larger and faster debt relief and by giving more and better focused development assistance, which would enable poorer countries to sustain a meaningful level of development.

It is only fitting that as a developing economy, Ghana identifies itself with the cause of the least developed countries, most of which are in Africa. In this connection, we fully subscribe to the preparatory work for the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. We expect consensus to be reached on the accessibility of products of least developed countries to the developed markets.

Our comments on this occasion would be incomplete without touching upon the crucial question of the empowerment of women and the attainment of gender balance. We also wish to express concern about the persistence of discrimination against women in most parts of the world in spite of the progress achieved since the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in 1995. The challenges to the achievement of gender balance can be eliminated through a renewed commitment to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. We therefore call on all countries which have not yet ratified the Convention to take steps to do so, and urge prompt implementation of the provisions of the Convention. We also urge those who have entered reservations incompatible with the purpose of the Convention to reconsider their stance, in the interest of advancing the cause of women.

The promotion and protection of the rights of children are of equal concern to my delegation. They are the compelling reasons for our co-hosting jointly with the Government of Canada a workshop on children in armed conflicts. It is our expectation that Member States will endeavour to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child before the General Assembly's special session in 2001 that will review the implementation of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and of the Plan of Action. It is also our hope that the positive outcome of the just ended International Conference on War-affected Children, held in Winnipeg, Canada, will be fully implemented to ensure the worldwide protection of children during conflicts.

I now turn to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, whose impact has been greatest in sub-Saharan Africa, where it is estimated to have affected the modest gains in social development. Statistics released during the XIII International AIDS Conference in South Africa in July this year showed that almost a third of all people with HIV/AIDS are between the ages of 15 and 24 years. Every minute six people under the age of 25 catch HIV, with girls more than 50 per cent more likely to contract the virus than boys. Based on this data, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has emphasized that to defeat the disease, Governments must commit themselves to "the largest mobilization of resources in their history" and organize themselves as if they were fighting "a full-blown war of liberation", with young people in the forefront.

This staggering situation must prick the conscience of the entire international community into rendering full support for efforts to control and minimize the spread of the disease. Ghana supports the Secretary-General's proposal for the adoption of 2005 and 2010 respectively as deadlines by which to reduce the rate of infection of young persons through the assurance by the developed partners and their pharmaceutical industries of the easy availability of inexpensive vaccines. To reach that goal, we must also invest in education, publicity, open discussions and

moral counselling of our youth, in particular. They must understand that it is indeed possible to avoid the disease by exercising care, since this fatal disease is transmitted in a very limited number of ways. We appeal to our developed partners for their full cooperation.

Finally, there is no doubt that the United Nations remains the only instrument for confronting the challenges of this millennium. However, it can surmount these challenges only by sustaining the good will and credibility it enjoys among Member States and this can be achieved only by expediting the democratization of the Organization. May the new vision which our leaders have charted for the Organization in this new century spur us all to concrete action to free our peoples, whose faith and trust reside in us, from fear, want and exclusion.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Aleksandar Dimitrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Dimitrov (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Holkeri on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. At the same time, I would like to express our appreciation to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for the results achieved during his presidency.

On this occasion, I would also like to express our gratitude to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his efficient and relevant leadership of the Organization. The Republic of Macedonia will continue actively to contribute to the realization of the goals of the United Nations.

I also welcome the admission of Tuvalu to the United Nations, wishing it success in its contribution to United Nations activities and expressing our wish to establish diplomatic relations. At the same time, the Republic of Macedonia expresses its readiness and calls for the acceleration of the process of establishing diplomatic relations with all other States Members of the United Nations with which we have not yet done so.

In the region where the Republic of Macedonia is located, the situation has to some extent improved after the huge humanitarian crisis that took place in Kosovo. The heavy consequences of the crisis, which posed a serious threat to the stability and security of the Balkans and more widely in Europe, have not been fully overcome.

The Republic of Macedonia has and will have in the future a vital role to play for peace and stability in South-East Europe and beyond. The risks confronting the Republic of Macedonia were enormous. The Macedonian Government and our citizens have done everything within their capacity to respond to the problems. However, as was the case in the previous crises that occurred in the Balkans and during the Kosovo conflict last year as well, as one of the countries that most directly felt and bore the brunt of the damage, the Republic of Macedonia has shown and confirmed its long-term commitment to acting as a factor for peace and stability in the region. The Government, even in such conditions, persisted in its policy to preserve the stability of the Macedonian State and at the same time to reaffirm its capability to respond to all challenges and risks confronting it, in particular in the economic and social fields.

One of the main priorities of the foreign policy of the Republic of Macedonia is to further improve good-neighbourly relations with all its neighbours. This commitment has been confirmed through a number of our initiatives, resulting in more advanced and developed relations in bilateral cooperation and intensified cooperation within the framework of a number of regional initiatives. My country is aware that stability and prosperity, in the medium and long terms, can be ensured only if stability is spread throughout South-East Europe, with intensive mutual communications and good-neighbourly cooperation among all States of the region.

My country has managed, with almost all its neighbours — Greece, Albania and Bulgaria, but not the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, with which we continue to negotiate the demarcation of our common border — to have outstanding relations and to develop cooperation in many areas of common interest. We have significantly improved relations with our southern neighbour, Greece. We continue to hold talks on our differences over the name of my country, under the auspices of the Secretary-General, expressing our will and interest in resolving this issue as soon as possible, taking into account the reality and dignity of the country and all its citizens.

Despite the huge expectations and initial support, the project that is most expected to contribute to the lasting stabilization of the region — the Stability Pact — has not managed to ensure the implementation of a large number of ideas and plans that have been submitted and accepted. The Pact, a significant example of the joint engagement and functioning of a large number of international organizations and States, is intended to hasten the revitalization of the countries of South-East Europe and their integration into European structures. I appeal to all participants engaged in this process, especially the donors and the wider international community, to make the utmost efforts to speed its urgent and timely implementation through the accelerated and full realization of these projects. This will provide for the economic prosperity of the countries of South-East Europe and strengthen democratic processes, respect for human rights and stability in the region. The implementation of the Pact constitutes a natural upgrading of our activities within the context of regional initiatives to promote good-neighbourly relations and the possibility of the realization of the foreign policy priorities of my country: its full integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

In addition to its foreign policy activities, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia is fully committed to carrying out fundamental reforms based on European standards — political, economic and democratic — with maximum respect for human rights, including minority rights. The Government of my country is continuously working on the improvement of inter-ethnic relations. A law on higher education was recently adopted that paves the way for private higher education in minority languages. Therefore, as a result of our commitment, concrete steps and achievements, by the end of this year my country will be the first in the region to conclude the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union.

The efforts of the international community to stabilize the region, to which the Republic of Macedonia has contributed widely, are beginning to show results. Despite the limitations, it should be taken into consideration that the seriousness and complexity of the situation in Kosovo, and in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a whole, mean that the consequences of this situation cannot be alleviated with the speed desired by all of us, especially by the countries of the region.

In regard to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, our view is that its democratization is one of the key factors for the comprehensive stabilization of the situation in the region. Our joint efforts should be directed at support for the democratic forces in that country and at joint actions to start the democratic process, followed by the provision of opportunities for economic prosperity. It is important to reassess the overall effects of the sanctions, which should not be directed at the citizens. We hope that the upcoming elections in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will be fair and democratic, in accordance with European and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe standards, and be a step towards that country's democratization.

Regarding the situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, I would like, in my capacity as Chairman of the South-East European Cooperation Process, to inform the Assembly about the joint declaration recently adopted by the Foreign Ministers of the participating States in New York. In the declaration we, the Foreign Ministers, expressed our concern about the latest developments in the situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as regards the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections, and confirmed our support for the democratic forces in that country and for its efforts to start the democratic process.

All of this might contribute to the integration of that country into the international community and to its participation in the work of international organizations, following the path that all the other successor States of the former Yugoslavia have taken. Furthermore, the resolution of the succession issue of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on the basis of the equality of all successors — as acknowledged by the decisions of the European Union/United Nations International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, as well as by the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions — is a prerequisite for stability and peace in the region.

Concerning the issue of succession, I would like to point out that during the Millennium Summit and Millennium Assembly, the four successor States have once again reaffirmed their joint position and proposed to work more intensively to settle this issue.

Furthermore, I would like to express our support for the stability and the reform processes undertaken in Montenegro and for the efforts of the democratically

elected Government there to continue pursuing economic and democratic development. We also support that Government's greater involvement in the work of international bodies and organizations and in other regional cooperation processes.

The consistent position of my country, which was stated well before the outbreak of the Kosovo crisis and adoption of the Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), was to support a peaceful and political solution to the Kosovo crisis through substantial autonomy in the framework of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, respect for the human rights of all living in Kosovo, respect for the inviolability of the existing borders and, finally, the economic reconstruction and stabilization of Kosovo and of the region.

We support the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force (KFOR). We are convinced of the need to build democratic institutions and a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo, and to find a model of civil society that does away with any propensity to create ethnically cleansed territories. The local elections in Kosovo are of paramount importance for its future.

The Republic of Macedonia is concerned about the reported violence and the increased number of inter-ethnic incidents and tensions in Kosovo. We consider that KFOR should strengthen its border control activities, with the aim of preventing violence from spilling over into the neighbouring countries, including my country. I am stressing this because there have been several serious incidents at the border of the Republic of Macedonia.

In the hope that the developments in Kosovo will be the last serious challenge in the Balkans, we will have to defend together more successfully democratic principles and values and develop long-term preventive strategies. Regional stability can be provided only by economic prosperity, democracy and respect for human rights and the rights of national minorities, as well as through intensive regional and bilateral cooperation. However, the most serious guarantee for the security of the region and its transformation into an area of democracy, development, stability and cooperation remains the early integration and full-fledged membership of the countries from the region in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

This year's Millennium Assembly presents a genuine opportunity to analyse the work of our Organization and to evaluate its efficiency in resolving issues of international interest. We all hope that the directions for future development will also be underscored, with the aim of further promoting the achieved results and practices.

One of the main characteristics of the modern world is that now more than ever there is a great deal of interdependence. This represents a new challenge, and at the same time is a new feature of international relations. Moreover, when everybody is talking about the enormous significance of the ever more important multilateral character of the international scene and about globalization, the question of the equal participation of all the world's actors is being raised. That is, at issue is the official representation of the voices of all peoples. In this regard, I would like to express our support for the efforts of the Republic of China on Taiwan to become integrated into the international community, taking into consideration the interests of that country and also its significant contribution to international cooperation and the solidarity it has shown. It is in the interest of our Organization that the 23 million people of the Republic of China participate in its activities.

The negative effects of crises, threats to peace, security and economic development, and the pollution of the environment are felt globally. In accordance with the new situation in international relations, needs and visions, an obvious demand exists to strengthen the role of the United Nations. Our Organization can successfully carry out its activities only if the Member States fully contribute to their realization.

In order to allow the Organization to be able to play a successful role in the twenty-first century, it is necessary to adequately reform it. We welcome the efforts made by the Secretary-General thus far to this effect, and at the same time we would like to urge him and the Member States to continue. Furthermore, I would like to underline that the reform of the United Nations will be successful only if strengthening the role of the General Assembly follows the reform of the Security Council. In our view, it is necessary to increase the number of permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council on the basis of the new reality in international relations. These new members should come from both the developing and developed countries.

What needs to be done so that the United Nations can adequately respond to the challenges of this century? The Millennium Summit offered part of the answer. The adopted Millennium Summit Declaration creates obligations for all Member States in their future endeavours. We share the opinion that, although the Declaration is a political document, it is first of all an action plan of our Organization for the period to come. Stressing the importance of the adopted document, I would like to urge the General Assembly to begin implementing it. In these efforts, the Republic of Macedonia will actively contribute.

The Republic of Macedonia will also continue to contribute to the strengthening of international peace and security. I emphasize that part of our contribution to the realization of the issues will be elaborated under the three agenda items as a follow-up to the resolutions submitted by the Republic of Macedonia.

The maintenance of international peace and security worldwide will continue to be the priority of our Organization in the twenty-first century. As the Secretary-General stated in his report, the world, and our Organization in particular, will be faced with the need to be fully involved in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and the development of the affected States. Therefore, prevention should become one of the primary instruments of our Organization. In regard to our contribution to prevention activities and policy, I would like to inform the Assembly that in the Republic of Macedonia an international centre for conflict prevention and resolution is being established.

Of great importance to stability and security, in our view, is the control of small arms and light weapons, which pose a large threat to peace in many regions of the world. In that connection, the United Nations, in cooperation with other regional organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), can have a serious impact on preventing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

We urge the international community to take strong measures in its efforts to stop arms trafficking, especially of small arms and light weapons. In that respect, we hope that that the international conference on this issue, which will take place next year, will contribute to more efficient actions.

Among the reasons for the eruption of a large number of local conflicts worldwide are economic and social factors. Globalization, apart from its positive effects, has a number of negative implications for the small and least developed economies. Financial resources for development are necessary; realistically, the United Nations is not able to provide them. We support the appeal for the necessary voluntary contributions from Member States, but also the idea of involving other participants, such as international financial institutions, the private sector and other bodies. In this respect, we welcome next year's international Conference on Financing for Development. I underline that writing off the debts, or part of them, of countries affected by objective external influences would have a very positive impact. It would also help to diminish global poverty and unemployment and aid the overall economic development of the indebted countries.

The General Assembly is the proper place for evaluating achievements in the promotion and protection of human rights and freedoms. There has been an impressive development of international human rights law in the last 50 years. Today we can proudly state that the United Nations, with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other instruments, succeeded in affirming the international consensus — that human dignity is to be the basic standard and the main goal for all people and nations.

Last year we marked the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and next year there will be a world summit on this issue. I take this opportunity to announce the intention of the Republic of Macedonia to sign in the very near future the two Optional Protocols to the Convention, the first on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the second on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Before I conclude, I would like to single out a few issues to which my Government attaches crucial importance: first the situation in Africa, both political and economic; secondly, the Middle East peace process; thirdly, the financial situation of our Organization — all Member States should fulfil their obligations; and, finally peacekeeping operations, which contribute to the affirmation of our Organization on a global scale. This is the right moment for their

restructuring and strengthening on the basis of the report (A/55/305) prepared by the Brahimi Panel.

Many challenges await us in the twenty-first century. Our obligation is to make the world a better and happier place to live in. In the realization of that aim, the United Nations has a significant place and role. The significance and existence of our universal Organization lies in its skilfulness in adapting to real situations and future challenges.

We expect this year's Millennium Assembly to contribute to the realization of this aim. I assure the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia's contribution to its successful fulfilment.

The Acting President: *(spoke in Spanish)* Before calling on the next speaker, the Foreign Minister of Australia, I draw the attention of Member States to the appeal in connection with the observance of the Olympic Truce during the games of the XXVII Olympiad, held in Sydney, Australia, from 15 September to 1 October. The appeal was made on 5 September, at the closing of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, by the President of the Assembly for that session, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab.

I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia.

Mr. Downer (Australia): I join my colleagues in congratulating the President on his election as President of the General Assembly for its fifty-fifth session and you, Madam Vice-President, on your election to your position.

I am also delighted to welcome Tuvalu as the 189th Member of the United Nations. Australia has long-standing and very friendly relations with Tuvalu, and we have worked closely together as members of the South Pacific Forum and the Commonwealth. We are pleased that Tuvalu is now a Member of the United Nations, and look forward to new opportunities to work together for the United Nations common goals of peace and development.

We meet today just after the largest number of heads of State and Government in history gathered for the Millennium Summit. While the Summit touched on the multitude of problems facing the world at the start of a new century, a theme common to many speeches was the need for the United Nations to reform so as to meet the challenges of the era: the challenges of securing peace, of fighting poverty and of empowering and liberating oppressed peoples.

I want to respond to those calls for reform in my remarks to the Assembly today.

Without continuing commitment to reform, the United Nations — like any organization — cannot expect to keep up with rapid change in the contemporary international environment. In the absence of change and adaptation, the Organization will wither as the nations of the world bypass it in favour of institutions and mechanisms that are more relevant to their needs.

Australians believe that the most fundamental task of the Organization — and the very reason for its creation at the end of the Second World War — is the maintenance of international peace and security. In recent years we have seen the United Nations perform at both ends of the spectrum of relevance and effectiveness: at a low point in addressing problems in Kosovo and Rwanda, and at a high point in the resolution of the conflict in East Timor.

I am a strong advocate of an active role for the United Nations in the restoration and preservation of international peace and security, especially in situations where there may be imminent danger of humanitarian catastrophe. Appropriate action by the United Nations in these circumstances does more than perhaps anything else to demonstrate the continuing relevance of the Organization to an often sceptical international public.

Today I want to focus attention on four aspects of reform within the United Nations system: reform of the Security Council; electoral group reconfiguration; reform of peacekeeping; and reform of the human rights treaty committee system. It is our view that progress in each of these areas must be achieved to enable the United Nations to deliver results and ensure its relevance and effectiveness.

Reform and expansion of the Security Council is driven by two fundamental, interrelated imperatives: the need to restore the representative nature of the Council by reconfiguring its composition to reflect the size and diversity of contemporary United Nations membership, and the need to enhance the Council's credibility, authority and legitimacy.

The Australian Government's view has long been that expansion in both categories of membership is

needed to restore balance and equity to the composition of the Council. New permanent seats should be assumed by the under-represented developing regions of the world. New permanent seats should also be allocated to the major industrialized Powers best able to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. Equally importantly, other Members of the United Nations should be given the opportunity to contribute directly to the work of the Council through periodic participation as elected members. Expansion of the non-permanent membership would enhance the representative nature of the Council, enabling it to act genuinely on behalf of the whole membership.

Australia has long voiced concerns about the veto and continues to argue that there must be limitations on its use. Of course, all permanent members of the Council, old and new, must remain accountable for their performance, and to this end any new arrangements for the Council should be reviewed after 10 or 15 years.

Regrettably, discussion on Security Council reform has failed to reach agreement on a package of reforms in the six years since the Open-ended Working Group was established. The impasse is disappointing, and I hope that this session will give new impetus to the reform effort. It is clear from statements at the Millennium Summit, and during this debate, that there is strong support for reform. Renewed commitment and flexibility are needed from all sides.

In the recent debate about United Nations reform, one key element has largely been missing. I refer to the United Nations electoral groups. The electoral groups were established to ensure that there was fair and equitable representation on United Nations bodies, so that all Members who wanted to make a contribution to United Nations decision-making would have an opportunity to do so. Now that three decades have passed since the formalization of the present groups, it is time that we focused on their relevance to present and future geopolitical realities.

The current group system reflects the geopolitics of the 1960s. Since that time, more than 60 nations have joined the United Nations, leading to significant disparities between the size of groupings and an inadequate level of representation for some subregions. In addition, the original rationale for the configuration of the electoral groups has eroded, creating dissonance in the way many Member States organize themselves politically and electorally.

The previous realignment of groups in 1963 was a long and difficult process, impelled by significant changes to the United Nations system after the entry of many newly independent States from Africa and Asia. I recognize that group reconfiguration is no easy matter, and accept that change now will be similarly complex. For that very reason, we should delay no longer in commencing a serious debate of these issues. While there are many possible configurations for revised electoral groupings, and many sensitivities around altering the status quo, the dramatic global changes since the current system came into force have created historical anomalies that cry out to be redressed. Australia looks forward to working with others to achieve that goal.

As part of the Australian Government's commitment to a strong and relevant United Nations, we recently completed a review of the United Nations human rights committee system, with the objective of improving its effectiveness. The review proceeded from our Government's commitment to the international promotion and protection of human rights, and a firm belief that the United Nations has a central role to play.

Australia has a proud human rights record, and we take our international rights and obligations seriously. We are party to both human rights Covenants and to the four conventions. Within Australia, which has a strong civil society, human rights are protected by a range of key civil and political mechanisms, including a strong democratic tradition, our Constitution, an independent judiciary, a free press and wide-ranging anti-discrimination legislation. Internationally, Australia is a strong proponent of the universal application of human rights standards and is committed to continued support for international human rights protection.

We are concerned that the committees established to monitor international compliance with human rights treaties are beginning to lose credibility and effectiveness because of the way they operate. It is also important that the international protection system work efficiently and effectively so that democratic countries, such as Australia, which have a proud record of extending generous humanitarian assistance can continue to have the confidence and support of their

own domestic constituencies for such humanitarian protection.

Australia's review found that the committees need to adopt a more consistent approach to their role and understand the pitfalls of simply accepting without analysis the submissions put before them by non-governmental organizations. It is important that adequate recognition be given to the role and views of Governments which are democratically elected and which take their treaty commitments and reporting obligations seriously. The committees also need to be more balanced and strategic about targeting key human rights offenders and avoid unfairly focusing their criticism on countries with good human rights records.

For some years now Australia, together with a number of other countries, including Canada, New Zealand and Norway, has been advocating reform of the treaty committees. Most recently, the Australian Mission to the United Nations in Geneva hosted a meeting of about 20 countries to discuss treaty committee reform. The United Nations itself has also recognized the need for reform of the treaty committee system, and Australia has been fully supportive of these international reform efforts.

Australia now intends to broaden such efforts by spearheading a high-level diplomatic initiative to garner broad support for reforms to improve the functioning of the committees and professionalize their operations. Reforms could include the provision of adequate resources to the human rights treaty committees, improvements in their working methods, standardized rules of procedure when considering States' reports and better consultation between the committees themselves to coordinate reporting timetables and to facilitate cooperative work on reform issues.

But Australia does not have a monopoly on good ideas, and we want to work closely with United Nations officials and with like-minded countries to make the treaty committee system work more effectively for the good of all Member States and for the protection of human rights.

We will therefore be talking widely with others to develop concrete proposals for reform. We will raise these issues in the General Assembly, at the Commission on Human Rights and in other appropriate meetings. We also think that the regular meetings of States parties to the six human rights treaties should discuss reform issues and provide guidance to the respective committees on their working methods.

Australia wants to maximize the effectiveness of the treaty bodies. We will not shy away from our responsibilities, but will press for the reforms that are needed to make the system work well and achieve its objectives. If reform does not occur, the committee system will increasingly be ignored and made redundant. That would be a setback for the cause of human rights.

I now turn to the matter of peacekeeping and the maintenance of international security. Australia has a long and honourable tradition as a participant in United Nations peacekeeping operations, most recently in East Timor, and I believe that the strength of our commitment is reflected in the recent appointment by the Secretary-General of Australian Major-General Tim Ford as his Military Adviser. The experience of the 1990s has clearly shown that the ability of the United Nations to meet an expanding and increasingly complex range of peacekeeping demands is under strain. The decade witnessed some important successes in peacekeeping, notably in East Timor, but also some smaller and frankly rather unheralded operations. It also saw some tragic failures, the costs of which were often measured in human lives.

I commend the Secretary-General's commitment to blunt scrutiny and review of the United Nations performance, including the reports on Srebrenica and Rwanda. We particularly commend his initiative in convening the Brahimi Panel on United Nations Peace Operations. The Brahimi report (A/55/305) is a landmark document, setting out a blueprint for modernizing the United Nations peacekeeping and related functions. We must move expeditiously to consider its recommendations.

Let me highlight briefly five points that, in Australia's view, are among the most significant lessons of recent experiences.

First, military intervention must be used only as a last resort. All efforts must be made to find peaceful solutions. In this context, we welcome the Brahimi report's emphasis on preventive action and peace-building.

Secondly, when the United Nations is deployed, there must be a peace to keep. There are real dangers in sending troops indefinitely into harm's way in the

absence of a clear peace plan and reasonable prospects of achieving it. Disputing parties must be committed to peace and must be held accountable for their actions.

Thirdly, peace operations must have a mandate from the Security Council that is appropriate to the job they are being asked to do. If the environment is hostile, they must be appropriately equipped and able to project credible force.

Fourthly, deployment must take place quickly once a decision is taken by the Security Council. Delays can lead to the further deterioration of a situation and can cost lives. The Brahimi report offers a number of useful ideas to speed deployment which merit careful consideration.

Fifthly, United Nations peace operations must have a clear exit strategy. This is linked in particular to the clarity of Council mandates: as the Brahimi report rightly stresses, mandates must be clear, credible and achievable. It is also linked to the efficacy of accompanying peace processes and peace-building efforts.

We welcome the attention given to these issues in the Brahimi report. We also support the point that the United Nations must be given the resources it needs to carry out the demands that we make of it. There is no question that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations needs to be strengthened and reformed. Ultimately, it is our responsibility, as Member States, to support a stronger and more effective United Nations peacekeeping capacity. This includes placing the financing of peacekeeping on a surer footing and paying our assessed contributions in full and on time.

I cannot conclude without referring to the question of East Timor. When I addressed this Assembly one year ago East Timor was in the throes of the most appalling violence at the hands of a brutal and lawless militia. Since then important progress has been made in restoring security and building the foundations of an independent East Timor. Australia pays tribute to the men and women of the International Force in East Timor and of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor for their commitment and, in too many cases, their sacrifice.

East Timor faces a long and difficult path to peace and prosperity. Australia is playing a major role in the territory's reconstruction through the United Nations and other organizations, as well as bilaterally. We are committed for the long term to helping the East Timorese build their emerging nation not only for the benefit of the East Timorese, but in the interests of stability and security in our region.

Regrettably, the pro-integration militia continue to pose a significant threat to security and stability. Intimidation and violence against Timorese refugees and humanitarian aid personnel in the camps on the East-West Timor border must be halted. The killing of workers of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) earlier this month deserves the world's strongest condemnation. Australia reiterates its call on Indonesia to fulfil its responsibility to provide effective security in West Timor, including by bringing to an end militia activity, bringing to justice those responsible for crimes, creating the necessary conditions for the return of UNHCR and resolving the refugee situation. We urge the Indonesian authorities to take all possible steps in this direction, including cooperating with the proposed Security Council mission.

If the United Nations is to remain relevant and credible, it must work on its strengths and maintain a strong commitment to a continuing programme of reform and renewal. The challenges that face the Organization are formidable, but not insurmountable. The need for change is clear and urgent, but I believe that it is not beyond the ingenuity and good will of our generation to emulate our predecessors in grasping the reform nettle.

At the Millennium Summit the world's leaders highlighted the need for the United Nations to meet the challenges of the new century. Let us heed their call, and work together with renewed determination and commitment to make this Organization more representative and much more effective.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations A/55/PV.21

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-fifth session

21st plenary meeting
Monday, 18 September 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I now give the floor to the Chairman of the delegation of Bahrain, His Excellency Mr. Jassim Mohammed Buallay.

Mr. Buallay (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my great pleasure to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session and to wish you every success in your task. May I also assure you of my delegation's cooperation in achieving the objectives we all desire. It is also my pleasure to thank your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for his efforts in conducting the proceedings of the fifty-fourth session, as well as the proceedings of the special sessions held during the same period.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to express my deep appreciation for the valuable and constant efforts that Secretary-General Kofi Annan has made to enable the Organization to deliver its message and to enhance its role in the maintenance of peace and security throughout the world.

May I also extend my delegation's congratulations to the Government and people of Tuvalu on the occasion of its admission to membership in the United Nations. Its admission is a further demonstration of the universality of the Organization.

The fifty-fifth session is remarkable because it also encompasses the work of the Millennium Summit, which was attended by a large number of leaders of Member States. The very presence of those leaders, and the discussions and meetings they held, served to underscore the importance they attach to the role and responsibilities of the United Nations in the new century. They also identified the changes and challenges that will require joint international cooperation on the basis of the lofty and noble principles and purposes enshrined in the Organization's Charter.

More than half a century after its establishment, the world Organization must deal effectively with political, economic, social and cultural changes and take advantage of their positive impact. This is particularly the case with regard to the ongoing and accelerating revolution in the fields of communications, modern technology and economic globalization. In this regard, it is my pleasure to commend the Secretary-General's report to the Millennium Summit, entitled, "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century". That report has shed light on the global issues of the years to come and includes the positive aspects, misgivings and apprehensions associated with those issues.

The State of Bahrain welcomes the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the reaffirmation by Member States of their faith in the Charter's principles and the need to strengthen the role of the Organization. We are confident that if we are successful in giving effect to those principles, the

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

00-64680 (E)

Organization will be able to fulfil its political, economic, social and human responsibilities. Foremost among those responsibilities are the preservation of international peace and security and combating disease, poverty, ignorance, drugs, violence, terrorism and crime. Those responsibilities also include preservation of the environment and natural resources.

While the cold war era threatened the world with the dangers and risks of war, the ultimate challenges the world must face in the future include border disputes, racial and ethnic conflict, globalization of the international economy, development issues, and other political, social and environmental challenges, as well as issues related to weapons of mass destruction and terrorism.

The State of Bahrain — whose full integration and close association with the international community was emphasized in the address to the Millennium Summit by His Highness Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa — is determined to continue to shoulder its national, regional and international responsibilities with a view to meeting the requirements of the new century. Given its ancient civilization and the fact that it is fully committed to the obligations associated with membership in the United Nations and the international community, Bahrain will deal positively and within the framework of regional and international cooperation with the changes dictated by the new era in such a manner as to ensure justice, security, peace and prosperity for all.

Since it attained political independence and began to exercise full sovereignty over all its islands, territories and territorial waters, in 1971, under the late Emir, His Highness Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, the State of Bahrain has constantly sought to build a modern State and a developed civil society by preparing and training its people to deal with the requirements of the modern age and to take a positive role in the changes taking place currently and in the future. Today, in its new era, the State of Bahrain continues its strenuous efforts at modernization and progress through domestic openness and by taking progressive and measured steps in various fields. Those steps include guaranteeing freedoms and ensuring the rule of law and women's participation in all aspects of national life, notably through membership in the Consultative Council.

In the field of human rights, Bahrain continues to take considerable steps by signing a number of international conventions in recognition of the importance of those rights. Those conventions have made the resulting legal rights and obligations absolutely clear, while at the same time they firmly oppose the use of human rights as a pretext for interfering in internal affairs or for undermining religious beliefs, human values and cultural and social characteristics of States.

Despite its continuous efforts and the admirable standing it has achieved in the field of human development, the State of Bahrain, like other developing island States, faces a number of challenges stemming from its limited size, high population density and limited natural resources. As a result, Bahrain has undertaken ambitious development projects with a view to diversifying the sources of its national income. Those projects include an open economic policy that has made Bahrain an advanced regional and global commercial and financial centre.

In the area of foreign relations and the fulfilment of national and international obligations, the State of Bahrain's contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security are evidenced by the close relations it maintains with brotherly and friendly States on the basis of cooperation, mutual interests, mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States. Driven by its firm belief in the importance of regional and international security, the maintenance of which is a joint responsibility, and in the light of the serious and dangerous events witnessed by the Gulf region over the last 20 years the effects and ramifications of which continue to pose a threat to the security and stability of the area, the State of Bahrain will continue to call for adherence by all States to the principles that contribute to the maintenance of security and peace and the prevalence of stability, progress and prosperity.

Among the most important of those principles are respect for the status quo and the sanctity of existing borders; establishment of relations among States on the basis of the principles of good neighbourliness, mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States; recognition of the national sovereignty of each State; and settlement of disputes through peaceful means and in accordance with the principles of international law accepted by the parties to the dispute.

On this basis, and given its commitment to the maintenance of international peace and security, especially in the strategically important Gulf region, in which many States have vital interests, the State of Bahrain reaffirms its principled and consistent positions on current regional and international issues. Accordingly, it renews its invitation to Iraq to cooperate with the United Nations; to fully implement relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly those relating to weapons of mass destruction; and to release prisoners and detainees of Kuwaiti and other nationalities, as a means leading to the lifting of sanctions and to an end to the suffering of the brotherly Iraqi people. Meanwhile, it declares anew its call for the preservation of Iraq's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and its objection to any interference in Iraq's internal affairs.

With its deep interest and concern for a continued spirit of cooperation and good-neighbourly relations among the Gulf States, the State of Bahrain hopes that the positive developments in relations between the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Islamic Republic of Iran will lead to a peaceful resolution of the dispute over the three islands — Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb — which all belong to the United Arab Emirates. It also reaffirms its support for all efforts to that end and hopes that the work of the tripartite ministerial committee established by the Gulf Cooperation Council will succeed in finding a solution aimed at ensuring the preservation of the region's security and stability, in an atmosphere of amicable and natural relations among all its States and peoples.

The Middle East peace process has witnessed, and continues to witness, developments, both politically and on the ground, as evidenced by the contacts and negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, including, most importantly, the Camp David summit, held recently under the auspices of the United States of America, with a view to reaching a final agreement between the two parties.

Further, the contacts that have taken place in Washington in search of a possible resumption of negotiations on the Syrian-Israeli track are among the most significant developments in the peace process this year, despite the failure of such efforts owing to Israel's refusal to withdraw completely from the Syrian Arab Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967.

Insofar as the situation on the ground is concerned, the withdrawal from southern Lebanon, which Israel was forced to carry out as a result of the steadfast opposition and heroic resistance put up by the brotherly Lebanese people against the occupation, constitutes a significant turning point in the peace process and demonstrates that occupation can in no way ensure security.

The developments through which the peace process has gone on all tracks and in all stages have shown that the success of the process and the achievement of the desired just, comprehensive and durable peace are contingent upon the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and of all relevant resolutions of international legality, which call for the withdrawal of Israel from all Arab territories occupied since 1967 and acknowledge the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish their own independent state, with Jerusalem as its capital.

In accepting peace, with all the steps it entails, as a strategic option, the Arab side had hoped that Israel would implement all these resolutions and fulfil the terms of all agreements and commitments, as well as abide by the principles of the 1991 Madrid Conference, notably the principle of land for peace.

We believe that a fully comprehensive solution is a fundamental prerequisite for the achievement of a just, durable and comprehensive peace in a region whose peoples have been beset by conflicts and instability, which have drained their resources and abilities in the context of a heated and futile arms race that has deprived all parties of security. In order to save the peace process from total collapse and failure, we call upon the co-sponsors of the peace process and the international community to redouble their efforts and pressure Israel into meeting the requirements of peace by fully implementing all resolutions of international legality.

Despite the easing of global tensions with respect to certain regional and international issues, there are still issues in a number of different regions that give rise to concern on the part of the international community and that threaten security and stability, both within those regions and beyond.

It is unfortunate that internal strife persists in Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as in other areas. We therefore call once again for

the intensification of efforts to find solutions to such conflicts and to encourage the parties to direct their efforts and capacities towards the settlement of their disputes and the development of their countries and societies. We are pleased, in this connection, to welcome the recent positive developments in Somalia, which have led to the election of a President in that country. We appreciate all the efforts that have been exerted towards that outcome, which, we hope, will bring about security and stability for Somalia and for its brotherly people.

Furthermore, it is our pleasure to express our satisfaction at the agreement reached in Algeria this year between two neighbours, Ethiopia and Eritrea, and our appreciation for the efforts exerted in this direction by the Organization of African Unity and the constructive role played by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of the brotherly People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

It is perhaps true to say that the globalization of the economy and the stunning developments in the fields of information, communications and scientific innovation — which have torn down the barriers to the flow of international trade, facilitated the transfer of capital across borders, made interaction among various cultures inevitable and made every State in the world a neighbour to all other States — have both pros and cons and therefore constitute a great challenge for the future.

The misgivings with regard to globalization have been amply discussed and identified. Foremost among these is the fear that it will weaken States' national authority and their ability to act freely in determining the levels of their own economic and social development, which would have a serious effect on the living standard of the peoples of those States. The situation therefore requires a reform of the international economic order so as to enable it to deal with the financial, economic and social ramifications and consequent difficulties of globalization, whose primary victims are likely to be developing and poor societies.

The process of economic globalization and development has given rise to many challenges for the world economy and the international community. The positive aspects of globalization, as perceived by some, such as the smooth transfer of products, goods and services across borders and the immense advances in information technology, should be coupled with a balance between global and national economic policies.

Despite the benefits of globalization in the fields of information technology, electronic commerce, education, health, social development, access to markets and consumer benefits through the ability to compete, there is fear that globalization's adverse aspects might affect numerous segments of developing societies that might not have the ability to benefit from the opportunities provided by globalization, given their inability to compete — thereby increasing poverty and the marginalization of vast sectors of the population.

It is in the interest of the international community that the progress accompanying globalization be utilized to achieve economic growth and integration, to assist in the eradication of poverty and to achieve social equality and development by way of directing the process of globalization in a humane manner in order to mitigate its adverse effects. We must deal with this phenomenon in a manner conducive to the establishment of a world where a balance of interests is struck and where equality, mutual interest and an honourable way of life are available to all, without exception.

It is our pleasure to express, in this context, our support for the decisions and recommendations of the South Summit held in Havana and the Summit of the Group of 15 held in Cairo in June 2000, and the contents of the final document of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, held in Geneva last June, to follow up the implementation of the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development in respect of the human dimension of development.

Among the challenges that mankind and our international Organization must address in the new century is the conservation of the environment and the mitigation of the adverse effects of economic, industrial and technological developments in the world. Such a task undoubtedly requires a global effort to be made within the framework of the continuing implementation of the world programme for the protection of the environment set out in Agenda 21, which was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, by linking the interests of the developed countries with those of developing countries, while using all means and machinery available to fight pollution for the sake of

safeguarding our children and grandchildren from the dangers of a planet spoiled by human activity.

Another challenge is the military one posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and nuclear capabilities and their means of transfer, which have increased in many regions of the world in the past few years. Given the threat to the world's future, security and safety that such weapons pose, it is a welcome sign for mankind as a whole that the States Members of the United Nations have welcomed the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held in New York in April and May 2000, and that the nuclear Powers have agreed on the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Aware of the dangers of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, especially in the light of the wars and conflicts that our region has witnessed in recent decades, we in the Middle East, including the Gulf region, have supported all initiatives aimed at freeing the region from all weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons.

The gravity of the phenomenon of terrorism — which has intensified in recent years, challenging the will of the international community and posing a threat to the security and stability of States and peoples — is of concern to us all. In reaffirming our condemnation of terrorism, regardless of its form, cause or origin, we call for further measures to combat it, to punish its perpetrators and to prevent them from practising their activities by denying them shelter.

It is incumbent upon us to reaffirm and reactivate the role of the United Nations in order to meet and eliminate these challenges in the framework of the collective partnership provided for in the Charter, one of the most important objectives of which is to replace war and confrontation with dialogue and cooperation. We are convinced, however, that the momentum generated by the Millennium Summit and by the emphasis in its Declaration on support for the role of the United Nations in promoting harmony in international relations and maintaining world peace and security can be exploited only through the implementation of the essential reforms of the Organization's organs and bodies, especially the Security Council, by adhering to the principle of equitable geographic representation and transparency, which are among the most important elements that enhance its role in the maintenance of international peace and security.

The advent of the third millennium, with all the hopes it inspires, requires us all to consider and evaluate the action we should take to correct the concepts and adjust the machinery through which we hope to achieve peace, security, prosperity and well-being for all in a framework of close international solidarity on the basis of the oneness of the human race and its mutual interests. The unique characteristics of the cultures, civilizations, religious beliefs and social traditions of various societies and peoples should be used to promote understanding, rapprochement and interaction among all States and peoples in a world of tranquillity, justice, security and peace.

The millennium to which we look forward is one in which we hope relations among peoples will be enhanced and dialogue and cooperation will replace war and conflict, which bring nothing but devastation and destruction.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Borys Tarasyuk, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Mr. Tarasyuk (Ukraine): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at the current session and to wish you every success in discharging your duties.

I would also like to pay full tribute to your predecessor, Minister Gurirab, whose vast diplomatic experience and able guidance throughout the fifty-fourth session greatly contributed to its success and to the ultimate triumph of the Millennium Summit.

It has been only 10 days since the historic event of the Millennium Summit secured an unprecedented quorum of the world's leaders to discuss at the highest level the role and place of the United Nations in the system of international relations in the new era. By adopting the Millennium Declaration, the international community clearly demonstrated its support for the fundamental purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, which continue to be the basis of international law and the main instrument that governs international relations.

Ukraine's active participation in the work of the Millennium Summit and in the Security Council Summit, which was held on the initiative of the

President of Ukraine, testifies to the special importance that my country attaches to the activities of this universal Organization.

Like most other States — and the Millennium Summit unequivocally reconfirmed this — Ukraine denounces the threat or use of force as a means of solving inter-State problems. We strongly believe that only the United Nations possesses both the relevant powers and the wide range of tools and mechanisms to address today's major global problems. These problems are the same today as they were several decades ago: war, poverty, inequality in distribution of resources, repression and discrimination.

Having gathered on 7 September at the level of heads of State and Government for the second time in United Nations history, the Security Council reaffirmed its readiness to bear an essential share of responsibility for building a world free of fear, poverty and injustice.

We consider the most important achievement of the Security Council Summit to have been the commitment, reaffirmed at the highest level, to ensuring the effective functioning of the system of collective security and to enhancing the efficiency of available mechanisms for preserving peace and, in particular, for conducting peacekeeping operations. We believe that the United Nations will not be able adequately to respond to the challenges to peace and security in the twenty-first century unless its peacekeeping potential is enhanced. Ukraine welcomes the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, chaired by Ambassador Brahimi. My country finds most of its recommendations substantial and far-reaching and calls for their speedy implementation.

Ukraine has always considered United Nations peacekeeping to be one of the most important raisons d'etre of this Organization, which is called upon "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". That is precisely why since 1992 more than 12,000 representatives of Ukraine have participated in 20 United Nations peacekeeping operations and missions. Since the beginning of this year, Ukraine, fully recognizing its additional responsibility for maintaining international peace as a member of the Security Council, has increased twentyfold its contribution to peacekeeping operations.

In the course of the past eight months alone, Ukraine has deployed a contingent of 650 troops with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). We have also sent a group of military observers to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), to Ethiopia and Eritrea, and have sent a group of civilian police to the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). The deployment of a special Ukrainian police unit of 115 servicemen with the United Nations police force in Kosovo is being completed this week. Our military contingent earmarked for the United Nations operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo stands in full operational readiness.

Regrettably, it is common knowledge that human history can be called a chronicle of continuous wars and conflicts. I hope that at the end of the second millennium, having learned from its tragic past, humankind has finally grasped the simple truth — that it is necessary to fight the fires of wars long before they have erupted, because even the costliest peace is much better than the cheapest war. This leads me to emphasize the importance of the most expeditious and effective implementation of the proposal put forward by the President of Ukraine at the Millennium Summit and at the Security Council Summit. He spoke in favour of developing a comprehensive United Nations conflict prevention strategy, based on the large-scale use of preventive diplomacy and peace-building. Ukrainian experts stand ready for this work. I am glad to note that almost all the leaders who addressed the Millennium Summit recognized preventive action as a priority for the United Nations in maintaining peace.

In our view, the concept of regional centres on conflict prevention can become a practical step towards developing a relevant United Nations strategy. In this context, Ukraine's recent proposal to establish a regional centre for ethnic studies in Kyiv, under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), deserves proper attention. We think that the activities of such a centre, authorized to monitor current developments in the sphere of inter-ethnic relations in the OSCE region and directed at the timely detection of dangerous separatist tendencies, will be conducive to a further elaboration of the United Nations preventive strategy in cooperation with the OSCE.

My country is keenly following the process of conflict settlement in the neighbouring Balkans, the troublesome region of Europe. While developments in

Bosnia give us sufficient grounds for optimism about the future of its peoples, the situation in Kosovo still causes us serious concern. We are confident that a peaceful settlement in Kosovo has to be pursued in strict compliance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In our view, it is impossible to resolve this problem without determining the future status of Kosovo following negotiations between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the authorized representatives of the province.

Ukraine is determined to intensify efforts aimed at promoting the final peaceful settlement of the so-called "frozen" conflicts in the post-Soviet territories, particularly in Abkhazia, Georgia; Nagorny Karabakh, Azerbaijan; and Transdniestria, Moldova. As a member of the group of Friends of the Secretary-General, which is promoting a peaceful settlement of the almost decade-long Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, Ukraine cannot but be concerned about the lack of real progress towards peace in the region. I once again confirm the invitation by President Kuchma to host in Yalta the next round of negotiations between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides aimed at confidence-building.

President Kuchma has also presented a feasible plan for the settlement of the Transdniestria conflict, based on the principle of "acquired status" acceptable to all conflicting parties. Ukraine, together with the OSCE, is currently examining the possibility of reorganizing the peacekeeping mission in the region, which will be made up of peacekeeping contingents from Ukraine, Russia and other OSCE members. We very much hope that in the long run these initiatives will reinvigorate the process of resolving the conflict.

The credibility of the United Nations will always be measured by its ability to provide an adequate response to threats to peace and security in every region of the world. Today this principle should be upheld by giving special attention to the problems of the African continent. The untold sufferings of the peoples of Africa, resulting from both intra-State and inter-State conflicts, are unlike those in any other part of the globe.

Ukraine is determined to make a practical contribution to United Nations peace efforts aimed at resolving conflicts in Africa. This determination is reinforced by our aspiration to expand trade and economic cooperation with our African partners. Let me repeat the words of the President of Ukraine at the Security Council Summit:

> "Ukraine looks forward to a century of African renaissance and stands ready to hasten its arrival." (*S/PV.4194, p. 13*)

I would like to underline that, in resolving conflicts in Africa the international community has no alternative but to promote the need for strict adherence to the principles of sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of the countries of the region. This has to be particularly emphasized in relation to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the most dangerous challenge to peace at the turn of the century. Ukraine calls on all parties to the Lusaka Agreement to comply fully with the relevant Security Council resolutions and to implement their own commitments.

The recent events in Sierra Leone have become a serious test for our Organization. They prove the urgent need to consolidate international efforts, with a view to strengthening the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping.

I reiterate our position on the need to continue enhancing the sanctions regime against Angola's rebel group, UNITA. We are convinced that reducing UNITA's ability to wage war is an essential prerequisite for restoring peace in Angola. It should also be borne in mind that the sanctions have to be accompanied by greater international efforts to resolve this long-lasting conflict.

We note with optimism the latest developments in the process of settlement in Somalia. This long-suffering nation is painfully but steadily overcoming the obstacles in its path to peace and stability.

Over the past year an important step forward was taken in advancing one of the integral parts of the Middle East peace process — its Israeli-Lebanese component. The withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon in compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978) has created new conditions for further progress in the whole process. Ukraine sincerely hopes that Israel and Syria will also be able to achieve a breakthrough in their stalled negotiation process in the near future, and calls upon the parties to resume the dialogue as soon as possible.

We are following closely the process of solving the core issue of the Middle East problem — the question of Palestine. It is our firm belief that the political wisdom and farsightedness of the Israelis and Palestinians will eventually help them to reach a mutually acceptable compromise. We welcome the 10 September decision by the Palestinian Central Council to postpone the date of proclamation of the State of Palestine. Ukraine hopes that, following strenuous efforts on both sides, the Palestinian people will finally exercise their right to self-determination and to their own statehood.

The promotion of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are among the crucial issues before the United Nations and the whole international community at the turn of the century. We are convinced that those processes should go along with the overall improvement of the international situation in other spheres, the creation and practical implementation of universal security guarantees, unconditional adherence by States and international organizations to the norms and basic principles of international law and the consolidation of an atmosphere of mutual trust.

As a country which has made outstanding contributions to the process of practical nuclear disarmament, Ukraine fully shares the concern that the attention of the international community to this issue has substantially decreased. We believe that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are the cornerstones of international security and a means of averting a global conflict. In our view, achieving the universality of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty is the best way to prevent nuclear proliferation and to ensure the elimination of nuclear weapons. It is the nuclear States that should be in the vanguard of this process.

The problem of illegal arms trafficking, which has acquired a global dimension, also requires a universal approach to its solution. The key role of the United Nations is indispensable in consolidating the international efforts to fight this evil.

Turning now to the problem of the Security Council-imposed sanctions, I would like to reaffirm the position of my country on this issue. Sanctions were designed as a powerful tool to ensure the implementation of the Council's decisions. However, they were eventually turned into ineffective and sometimes even harmful instruments. It is therefore absolutely necessary to develop a clear and coherent methodology for the imposition and lifting of sanctions that takes into consideration the concerns of innocent civilian populations and the interests of third countries.

Ukraine supports the recent Security Council practice of defining time limits of sanctions at the stage of their imposition. We believe that it is of primary importance to develop objective criteria and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of sanctions and their impact — including on the target State. We also support the immediate lifting of sanctions when there are sufficient grounds to believe that they have served their purpose. This is indeed the case as far as the sanctions against Libya are concerned, where the Security Council should move, as soon as possible, to the next stage and take a long-overdue action.

Among the major challenges of the new century, the problem of HIV/AIDS occupies a special place. AIDS has become an epidemic of global proportions with enormous human and social ramifications that go far beyond the province of health alone. The time has come for the United Nations to elaborate a comprehensive agenda for action against this pandemic. Aware of the magnitude of this problem, the delegation of Ukraine, together with other sponsors has promoted the convening, as a matter of urgency, of a special session of the General Assembly on that question. We are encouraged by the wide support for this idea and look forward to further work towards its realization.

We are convinced that the multilateral forms of international cooperation have played and will continue to play a decisive role in the attainment of the goals of sustainable development. We support the reform efforts of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for improving the situation in the field of mobilization of resources and enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of its work.

During the difficult period of economic transition, the assistance to Ukraine by UNDP plays an important role by streamlining the efforts of various international partners. It also helps to alleviate the complex problems related to the elimination of the Chernobyl disaster's consequences and the decommissioning of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the countries participating in the July

donors' conference in Berlin, which pledged more than $320 million of additional funding for the transformation of the shelter facility into an environmentally safe system. Almost $50 million still needs to be raised to reach the amount required, and we count on continuing international assistance in this regard. I believe this could be effectuated within the framework of the United Nations Chernobyl programme. Let me underline that these funds will be aimed mainly at the implementation of realistic objectives, specifically the decommissioning and eventual closing down of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant by 15 December 2000, a decision that was reconfirmed by the President of Ukraine at the Millennium Summit.

We also hope that consideration at the current session of the General Assembly of the item relating to the integration of the countries with economies in transition into the world economic system will make it possible to elaborate a common strategy to solve specific problems of these countries.

In this context, we attach great importance to the accession of Ukraine to the World Trade Organization. International economic cooperation at the regional level is also of significance for Ukraine. I mean, in particular, the development of our relations with the European Union and interaction within the framework of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and the Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Republic of Moldova (GUUAM) group.

Fulfilling the concept of "human rights for all" in the next century is a task of global dimension. That is why strengthening and improving the international monitoring of human rights violations becomes particularly acute today. At the same time, we remain convinced that the use of force cannot be considered an adequate means of ensuring respect for human rights.

I wish to emphasize that adherence to and protection of human rights became the key policy principle of my country. Ukraine has signed and ratified all basic international documents in the field of human rights and put in place at the national level effective mechanisms for their implementation. This year Ukraine adopted a decision to abolish capital punishment.

The time that has passed since the historic Rome Conference clearly reaffirmed the epoch-making significance of the document it adopted. We consider the International Criminal Court the only viable democratic mechanism of a universal character to enforce compliance with and respect for international humanitarian law.

I would like to join previous speakers in expressing our great hopes for the continuing role of the United Nations in bringing solutions to global problems. Given the complexity and the multidimensional nature of this task, our Organization needs to stand on a solid financial footing. We hope that this session will enable us to speed up the process of reforming and improving the mechanisms of the apportionment of the United Nations expenses on the basis of objective economic criteria. Therefore, the process of United Nations reform, initiated three years ago, should get additional impetus.

There is also a need to reactivate the efforts aimed at Security Council reform, which is the key element within the process of renewing the United Nations. This was rightly emphasized in the statements of many world leaders at the Millennium Summit.

The absence of substantive progress on this issue limits the capacities of the Council as the major instrument of collective security. I would like to reiterate the position of Ukraine that the Security Council's comprehensive reform should be based on the norms and principles of the United Nations Charter. In our view, increased representation in the Security Council for all regional groups should remain an essential principle. The interests of both developed and developing countries have to be taken into account. Ukraine believes that the necessary balance within an expanded Security Council can be achieved through an increase in both categories of its members.

By pursuing the path of strengthening the United Nations and building up its institutions on democratic foundations, the international community reinforces its own capacity to meet the challenges of the time and to create a climate of justice in international relations and an atmosphere of mutual respect between States, peoples and civilizations.

In the course of the historic Millennium Summit, the international community, enriched by this Organization's half-century of experience, outlined the road map to be followed by mankind in the twenty-first century. Only by intensifying concerted and resolute efforts to attain our determined goals will we realize

the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations. After all, this is the only *raison d'être* for our Organization.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vartan Oskanian, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia.

Mr. Oskanian (Armenia): Allow me to join my colleagues in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. I am confident that this fifty-fifth session will be most effective and successful under your guidance. I would also like to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Gurirab, for his skilful leadership, and I welcome Tuvalu to the United Nations as a new Member.

Here in this great city just two weeks ago, an unprecedented number of heads of State gathered and outlined the challenges facing the world in the new millennium, together with their nations' achievements and their visions for the future. It is true that the myriad views expressed differed in perspective, focus, attitude and outlook, but it is also true that the leaders of the world left the Summit having renewed their common commitment to universal values and principles and to a more peaceful and prosperous world. All these were clearly reflected in the Secretary-General's report and the Millennium Declaration, which provide us with a blueprint for a common agenda in the years to come.

This is a global agenda to meet global goals, but, as is often said, all politics is local and everything begins at home. Therefore, in the final analysis, it is each individual State that must take up the responsibility in its own country and region to make a difference that will have a cumulative impact on the quality of the world in which we all live. Armenia is cognizant of its own responsibility and is committed to doing its part to enhance regional peace and security and to elevate the quality of life of everyone involved.

The Secretary-General's millennium report groups our global challenges under three blunt headings: freedom from want, freedom from fear and the freedom of future generations to sustain their lives on this planet.

Globalization is expected to drive economic development around the world in order to allow future generations to sustain their lives and to make possible the kind of economic self-sufficiency we all want for our peoples. The major task of Governments around the world today is the pursuit of sound policies and appropriate structural adjustments to meet the challenges that globalization presents and to take advantage of the opportunities it offers without falling victim to the hazards it threatens.

At the same time, the revolution in communication and information technologies has opened up the global market to new players. Information technology and the Internet have become the moving engines for economic growth and, at the same time, if used appropriately, its great equalizers. They hold the promise of unlimited progress and allow even small and landlocked countries to take advantage of global access in almost every area of their lives. Armenia is fully cognizant of this and has made information technology development the axis of its economic growth. We have already taken concrete steps towards bolstering the development of information technology and telecommunications and, together with foreign investors, have begun preliminary work towards an information technology industrial park on the outskirts of the capital.

At the same time, well aware that Armenia's educational system must be up to matching this call for infusing the existing intellectual capacity and talent with new skills, we will ensure that education curriculums include computer literacy and Internet familiarity. By 2005, all our schools will have computer capabilities with unlimited Internet access.

Freedom from want and freedom from fear go hand in hand. Without a free, democratic, open system at home and peace and security in our neighbourhood, it is not possible to achieve economic prosperity. During the nine years since the establishment of Armenia's independence, we have made great strides in anchoring democratic values, the rule of law and respect for human rights in our society. This year, with Armenia's membership in the Council of Europe, these processes will become irreversible. The responsibilities associated with membership will strengthen and reinforce all that has been achieved to date.

Economic prosperity also hinges on regional stability. At the same time, long-term peace, security and prosperity in our region depend on its equitable economic development and the development of multifaceted economic arrangements among countries and regional organizations. It is apparent that the new

environment of coexistence requires new approaches from international organizations. Regional and subregional integration has become politically and economically expedient. This is especially true in the Caucasus, which is emerging as a region for competing political and economic interests. We look at our security not only in a bilateral, but also in the broader regional European context. We are convinced that, in the long run, our national security must be anchored in regional stability.

We are confident that economic cooperation will help us transcend political problems and facilitate the resolution of political issues. A stable and democratic Caucasus is a work in progress. Still, the promise of democracy in the region must not shroud the fragility of the emergent equilibrium. We recognize and welcome the constructive role that the United Nations and other international organizations — such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States — can and must play to consolidate this regional equilibrium. Armenia intends to expand its cooperation within those organizations and more actively to participate in various regional institutions.

These diverse bodies, however, must not, by the uneven or inconsistent application of their principles, exacerbate existing regional disparities. Armenia is confident that the Caucasus is in need of a regional system for stability and security and we stand ready to work towards its formation. We were the first to propose, last year at the OSCE Istanbul Summit, the beginning of a process towards comprehensive regional security leading to a stability pact for the region. Armenia has adopted and will abide by its policy of complementarity, conducting relations with all countries which have political or economic interests in the Caucasus. This approach has worked quite effectively over the past several years and we believe that it has contributed to the reduction of polarization and tension in the region.

However, the region continues to remain adversely affected by the lack of formal relations between Armenia and our neighbour, Turkey. Although Armenia, from day one of its independence, opted for the normalization of relations and the establishment of diplomatic ties, Turkey insisted and continues to insist on certain conditions related to Nagorny Karabakh and the recognition of the Armenian genocide.

Ten days ago at the Summit, from this podium President Kocharian addressed this issue and extended a hand to our neighbour in order that we might together find a way to live with the truth of the past without jeopardizing the promise of the future. Unfortunately, Turkey's response indicated that it continues to let the fear of history limit its freedom to act. However, there is no national history in a vacuum. France and Germany, England and France, the United States and Japan, in order to transcend their histories of conflict, war and hatred, had to transcend the past together. Indeed, many nations have founded their spiritual and moral resurrection on exorcising their guilt, on the search for validation through truth, on facing their own past squarely. Redemption and reconciliation without truth will remain forever elusive.

The Millennium Summit Declaration addressed a topic that is very important in relation to Armenians' right to freedom from fear. The Millennium Declaration provided for the right to self-determination of peoples who remain under colonial domination and foreign occupation. In Nagorny Karabakh, there was both colonial domination by the Soviets and foreign occupation by Azerbaijan, which was illegally and unjustly given jurisdiction over the Armenian region in 1923. For a people whose compatriots lay just over the border, but out of reach, such a divisive act and the ensuing double layer of subjugation was untenable. During the decades of Soviet rule and then after the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Armenians of Nagorny Karabakh resorted to demanding their right to self-determination, the refusal of which led to military conflict, refugees and loss of life.

During the last six years, the military phase of the conflict has ceased, and Armenia remains committed to a lasting resolution that will provide for peace and security for Nagorny Karabakh, with a continuous geographical link with Armenia. We will continue to work intensely with the co-chairs of the Minsk Group and wish to underscore their contribution to maintaining the ceasefire regime. With equal fervour, we are ready to maintain direct contacts with Azerbaijan in order to search for compromise. However, we think that direct negotiations between Azerbaijan and Nagorny Karabakh would be more productive, as it is the people of Karabakh who will ultimately determine their own destiny and future.

In his report the Secretary-General rightly stated that today more wars are being fought within States than between them. Yet no attempt is being made to address this new challenge in a more effective, meaningful and realistic way.

Each conflict must ultimately be addressed on its own terms, and through the actions and the accommodations of its own peoples and its political leaders. What the international community can do is provide not only the support and the potential incentives for this process of transformation, but also the intellectual, conceptual models for exploring appropriate and suitable arrangements for the resolution of seemingly intractable conflicts. We believe that in designing appropriate frameworks within which hostile parties can find a common language, reassurances may be designed in a flexible manner which must be specifically geared to addressing particular types of conflicts. If I may be allowed a truism, we should think along the lines of "form follows function". The function of the probable solutions that must emerge, as well as the broad outline of an eventual peace agreement, must rely, we believe, on devices or principles that are tailor-made, highly specific and perhaps even unique. Without that kind of customization, we believe that generic, standard-issue formulas will not be well-suited to the resolution of the conflict in which we find ourselves at this moment deeply involved, and whose long-term outcome is of great concern to us.

For us, peace in Nagorny Karabakh represents, of course, the promise of transforming a situation of hostility and confrontation with our neighbour, Azerbaijan, into one of cooperation and mutually reinforced security. We would like to think of the day when Karabakh is transformed from being a chasm separating our countries into a bridge built for the benefit of all the populations concerned.

The political document adopted by the Millennium Summit sets the guidelines for the development of the United Nations in the coming years. Armenia is confident that this Organization, given its outstanding role and track record, has the capacity to address the new challenges in a most satisfactory manner. The vast experience accumulated over the last five decades can be successfully applied to secure peace and stability all over the world.

However, in response to today's new challenges and new demands, United Nations reforms must be carried through to strengthen this dynamic organization. With the proposed expansion of the Security Council, that strategic body will become more representative, and its decisions will be endowed with greater authority.

May the twenty-first century be the one that sees all nations united in shared goals and collective action.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Habib Ben Yahia, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia.

Mr. Ben Yahia (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am particularly pleased to express my congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. Your great diplomatic experience and your thorough knowledge of international affairs are the best guarantees for the success of this session. While assuring you of the readiness of our delegation to fully cooperate with you, we would like to wish you the utmost success as you carry out your responsibilities.

Allow me also to express my thanks to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for the remarkable role he played during the previous General Assembly session. His efforts made it possible to achieve positive results in the review and resolution of many issues.

The Millennium Assembly takes place at a time when the world is at the crossroads of two different eras. This makes it particularly important that this fifty-fifth session provide us with the opportunity to take stock of what we have achieved together and to begin developing a forward-looking strategy that will allow us to face the current challenges. We can identify and face these challenges only within the framework of a multidimensional, international partnership in the political, economic, social and development spheres.

President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and his peers who met at the Millennium Summit have underlined the main challenges that the international community must face. These challenges should set priorities for our joint efforts in the next stage, so that we can make the next millennium a millennium of international partnership, of the development of joint strategies, of the promotion of societies and satisfying their multiple needs, of the struggle against poverty and epidemics, of conflict prevention and of the establishment of a lasting

basis for peace and international security. In other words we should make this millennium truly a millennium of the common future of mankind.

The Declaration adopted by the Millennium Summit is a document of historical importance. It paves the way for the future work of the international community within the framework of the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. In the Declaration world leaders reaffirmed these purposes and principles and renewed their commitment to them. They also reaffirmed their adherence to the United Nations as the only forum for the expression of the international community's choices for the future and as the ideal instrument for achieving our collective aspirations.

At the end of the last millennium there were several major summits — including the Millennium Summit, the South Summit, the Non-aligned Movement summit and the two special sessions of the General Assembly, devoted to social development and women. The results of these summits and meetings, the visions expressed and the decisions taken regarding the future of international relations provide an important point of reference that makes it possible to develop a global and consensual strategy in order to build a true partnership between peoples and nations. The goal of this partnership should be to take up the future challenges together.

Among the lessons we have learned from these historic meetings was the consensus reached by all countries on the need for a renewed vision of the working methods that we have followed every year in recent decades in order to adapt to the requirements of our time, when different aspects of international life in the political, economic and social spheres are all interlinked.

The challenges of our modern world require a global vision and common action that would take into account the link between peace, security and sustainable development based on a political approach that combines democracy, human rights and good governance, as well as overall strategies for the fight against poverty on an international scale. Indeed, poverty has been identified by major international authorities and also in the statements that emerged from the Millennium Summit and the Security Council as well as by the Secretary-General in his reports to the Millennium Summit and to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session as one of the main causes of international economic imbalance and as a source of instability, conflict and tension in many regions of the world.

In our opinion, the international community is called upon today to objectively develop a concept of international peace and security as well as the means to preserve them. It is called upon to adopt a broader concept that takes into account not only the direct causes of wars, conflicts and tensions, but also their entrenched roots and the means to resolve them in order to ensure their prevention and to guarantee peace and security. The last decade has shown the magnitude of the means that are required to resolve conflicts and tensions throughout the world. This has generated a weakening of international will when true and direct participation in the quest for solutions to the many conflicts was needed.

The United Nations, despite its limited resources, remains the main actor that can resolve these conflicts. Previous experiences have taught us, among other things, that the principle of conflict prevention remains the best way to avoid conflicts and the resultant human tragedy and economic and social damage, which are difficult to remedy.

Indeed, within this international forum, we must work with regional organizations and international financial institutions to implement a strategic plan of action with new dimensions that would enshrine the principle of prevention as the main way to avoid conflicts and to deal with their deep and structural causes, through a global vision that would take into account the pressing needs of economic and social development. Experience has proved that stability and internal harmony within and between countries will not be achieved without national development and interdependent interests.

It is difficult indeed to imagine how a society can engage in internal violence or get involved in an external conflict if its interests are protected and if it enjoys well-being and prosperity — both fundamental conditions for peace and stability.

This vision conforms to the reform process under way at the United Nations, in the Security Council and at international financial institutions that have realized that the cost of prevention is far lower than the cost of post-conflict reconstruction, especially since certain

consequences, those that affect human beings, are difficult to remedy.

It is therefore high time that industrialized countries and international financial institutions honoured their commitments towards disadvantaged regions and countries in the form of official development assistance, by encouraging foreign investment and by settling the debt problem, including the servicing of the debt, in order to meet the requirements of development and to contribute effectively to formalizing the idea of prevention based on multifaceted international aid.

Before concluding my comments on the matter of peacekeeping and international security in this new international environment, I would like to underline the following. First, there is a need to introduce necessary reforms into United Nations procedures when it comes to peacekeeping operations, especially since the activities of our Organization are no longer limited to traditional missions, but also encompass disarming and reintegrating combatants, removing landmines, establishing State institutions and monitoring elections.

These new missions require greater material and human resources, as well as collective efforts. Of course, this requires a substantial strengthening of United Nations preventive capabilities.

Experience has shown that the success of peacekeeping operations depends on the prior consent of the parties concerned, on a clear mandate and on the availability of necessary resources.

We have also observed through our experience in peacekeeping operations that serious problems do exist, especially when it comes to delays in reimbursing contributing countries.

The report of the group of experts, developed under the chairmanship of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, contains important recommendations that command our attention and deserve in-depth study, especially since they deal with all aspects of peacekeeping operations.

Secondly, the role of the Security Council in peacekeeping and international security is crucial and indispensable. It draws its strength from the fact that it is a universal tool and that it embodies international legality.

As always since the 1960s, Tunisia remains ready to meet the United Nations calls, as well as those of the international community, to take part in peacekeeping operations throughout the world. Given the priority of the security of personnel serving in peacekeeping operations, in July Tunisia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

The need to introduce reforms to the Security Council is dictated today by international developments that have taken place since the adoption of the Charter. In this context, increasing the number of permanent and non-permanent members of that body on the basis of equitable geographic distribution is an urgent demand. We would like to stress the need to reach a consensus that would make it possible to increase the number of permanent members.

In this regard, I would like to recall that Tunisia supports the candidacy of Japan, Germany and other countries. An eventual solution should preserve the interests of all international parties and make it possible to satisfy the demands of developing countries and, above all, African countries, which are entitled to two permanent seats on the Security Council, to be distributed according to the rule of rotation. It is also necessary to improve the working methods of the Council in order to ensure that its work is marked by transparency and effectiveness. Since acceding to the Security Council as a non-permanent member, Tunisia has tried to ensure that its contribution to the work of that body is based on dialogue with the other members in order to bring viewpoints closer together and to reach results that would guarantee the success of all endeavours to safeguard peace and international security.

Along the same lines, with respect to the role of the Security Council, we cannot overlook the question of humanitarian intervention, which has been the subject of widening debate in recent years and whose review calls for particular and sustained attention.

We stress the need for an in-depth examination of all aspects of this matter. Indeed, if a particular humanitarian situation requires urgent intervention so that it does not deteriorate, such intervention cannot take place outside the framework of international law, the basic principles and norms of international relations and the provisions of the United Nations Charter. State sovereignty remains a fundamental tenet that can never be overlooked or ignored, because any violation of this

principle would alter the balance of international relations and risk the spread of anarchy.

The question of sanctions is one of the most important issues that United Nations bodies, including the Security Council, have to face. The experience of the past decade has shown that the use of sanctions must be modified so as to alleviate their impact on peoples, while certain criteria, such as their use as a last resort after all other peaceful means have been exhausted, must be applied.

In cases in which the imposition of sanctions is necessary, their duration should be limited. We should also define clear conditions for the lifting or suspension of sanctions and undertake an ongoing assessment of their humanitarian effects on the population of the target countries, as well as their direct impact on the interests of third countries.

In this connection, with regard to Iraq, Tunisia has always reaffirmed the need to unite all our efforts in order to reach a peaceful settlement of the dispute that would make it possible to end the embargo, reintegrate Iraq into the community of nations, put an end to the tragic suffering of the Iraqi people resulting from the sanctions imposed over the past 10 years and help to direct the efforts of the countries of the region and their peoples towards the achievement of development and stability. All parties must cooperate in order to resolve the other humanitarian aspects of the problem, in particular the issue and fate of missing Kuwaiti nationals.

With regard to the Lockerbie affair, the recent developments following the implementation of the agreement concluded on the matter and the suspension of the embargo imposed on Libya, it is time for sanctions to be lifted completely and definitively in order to allow the Jamahiriya to continue its overall development process and to support the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) as it strives to achieve the integration and complementarity on which all of its member States place great importance. Tunisia has made the AMU a strategic choice. It is constantly working to promote the Union and to strengthen its foundations and structures. With the help of its partners in the Union, it has tried to give this regional organization new impetus so that it can respond to the historic aspirations of its peoples.

With regard to the Middle East, we would like to express our regret that the negotiations at the Camp David summit meeting held in July stalled without an agreement that would guarantee a fair settlement of the Palestinian cause. Tunisia, which from the outset has supported the peace process on all tracks, is convinced that it is time to give concrete form to the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to build an independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, in accordance with international law and the terms of reference of the peace process based on the principle of land for peace. Tunisia hopes that the American Administration will continue its good offices, and that other influential parties, such as the European Union, Russia and Japan, will step up their efforts to help the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government reach an agreement that would make it possible to establish a just and lasting peace and guarantee the national rights of the Palestinian people in accordance with General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Achieving a just and lasting peace in the Middle East will also depend on progress on the Syrian track. Israel is called upon to withdraw from the Golan and to comply fully with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Israel is also called upon to respect the international borders of Lebanon and to refrain from violating the borders drawn by the United Nations.

Our States are encouraged to try to identify ways and means to face the phenomenon of globalization, with its consequences and economic and social repercussions, and to adapt to it in order to ensure that its dividends are shared and to spare our peoples, especially peoples of the South, the negative fallout from it.

The African continent is a region suffering most from development problems, despite major reforms undertaken by the countries of the continent in different areas. Despite the efforts made by certain African countries, Africa is still suffering from a severe lack of resources and assistance which prevents it from joining the global development process. In this context, one of the greatest challenges is to prevent the marginalization of the economies of developing countries and to ensure an international environment conducive to access to international markets and to an increased share of international trade. This will require the international community to provide the necessary impetus in the area of investment and financing if these

States are to develop, and to increase official development assistance, which has not only remained below 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of the countries of the North, but is actually decreasing, while the external debt crisis and debt servicing continue to burden developing countries.

In this context, we recall the initiative of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, calling for the recycling of debts in development projects, which would make it possible to reduce the debt burden and help the countries concerned.

I also take this opportunity to recall the appeal made by President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 1995 for the creation of a partnership and development contract between the countries of the south and north shores of the Mediterranean. This appeal is an extension of President Ben Ali's initiative, launched in 1989 from this lofty rostrum, for a global contract of peace and progress between the countries of the North and South aimed at strengthening cooperation and creating new prospects for stability and progress in the world.

Given the major progress achieved in the scientific and technological spheres in recent decades, the millennium on which we are embarking will undoubtedly be one of science, technology and communications, necessitating the sharing of the benefits of progress, including in the field of computers, which will create great prospects for the harmonious and balanced development of countries.

In this context, I recall Tunisia's initiative to hold a world summit on the information society, and its proposal, in the framework of the International Telecommunication Union, to host such a summit in 2003. I renew my appeal to all Member States and to the parties and institutions interested in this field to support this initiative and contribute as much as possible to organizing the summit in Tunisia.

Peace and security are part of a concept with complementary dimensions; it is no longer limited to the outbreak, management and resolution of conflicts, but, rather, encompasses everything that contributes to strengthening stability and offers opportunities for development and prosperity. Furthermore, exclusion and marginalization, in all their aspects, undoubtedly lead to extremism and open the way to tension and violence. We know today that the struggle against poverty has assumed considerable importance. Indeed, while many societies enjoy well-being and prosperity, large fringes of the world's population experience poverty and destitution, which are alien to moral values and human rights. Furthermore, abject poverty is one of the most dangerous sources of conflict and instability. The fight against this planetary scourge and the violence and internal and inter-State conflicts that it engenders is a universal duty and a moral obligation that all international parties must assume.

In this context, I wish to reiterate the appeal launched by His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali for the creation of a world solidarity fund, as an instrument to complement existing international mechanisms, without replacing them. This fund could be financed by donations and voluntary assistance from the international community, and its objective would be to finance field programmes to fight poverty directly and urgently.

President Ben Ali has made this proposal based on the success of the experience of the National Solidarity Fund, 26.26, set up in Tunisia in 1992, which helped lower the rate of poverty in our country from 22 per cent to 6 per cent. This proposal has been favourably received by member countries of the region and France, as well as by 12 international and regional organizations, such as the Group of 77, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the South Summit and the General Assembly special session on social development. With the international community's awareness of the need to fight poverty, and given the wide support that the proposal to create a world solidarity fund enjoys, Tunisia would like to present, during the current session, a draft resolution in this regard, which it hopes will obtain all the support necessary from Member States.

Tunisia has always attached great importance to democracy and good governance, because it is convinced that these values are an integral part of any rebirth and development. Since the change of 7 November 1987, we have introduced fundamental reforms to promote these values. Indeed, the principles of human rights, the culture of tolerance and respect for the right to difference are the bases of change in Tunisia, which has enriched the values of international solidarity and collective responsibility at all levels: political, economic and social.

The existence of a national solidarity fund is the best reflection of the importance of this aspect in

national life. An individual's awareness of his responsibility towards the future of his homeland implies solidarity and cooperation with all components of society, making it possible to remedy the problems of exclusion and marginalization in society. Democracy, human rights, good governance and national solidarity are interlinked values that must take into account the characteristics and specific features of each society, since there is no standard model that can be applied to everyone everywhere. This vision, which has been enshrined at various international forums would, thanks to the positive results seen in different countries, including Tunisia, be likely to constitute one of the main concepts we have been called upon to adopt consensually and to implement in the new millennium.

Indeed, the right of peoples to freedom and democracy is a concept that has become a daily practice in many countries and must be consolidated, taking into account the requirements of growth and progress that themselves constitute a fundamental condition for peace and stability. In this context, international partnership is a common denominator that must guide our action in the next millennium.

Finally, allow me to express the hope that this session will mark the rebirth of solidarity among all components of the international community, within which the United Nations will play a leading role through its outreach and its ongoing harmonious actions. Our objective would be that our action should contain a human global dimension to establish a common strategy and conditions for security, stability, development and prosperity on the basis of the common interests of all peoples everywhere.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Lila Ratsifandrihamanana, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Madagascar.

Mrs. Ratsifandrihamanana (Madagascar) (*spoke in French*): I join all those who have welcomed the start of this fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. Endorsing the Millennium Declaration of the Millennium Summit, I reiterate its message: Let us — the peoples of the United Nations, faced with new challenges; brothers and sisters, partners linked by and in our support for the principles of our Organization; with the expectations and constraints of our countries and peoples, yearning for peace and well-being; likewise facing the requirements of globalization and the manifold risks of conflict and marginalization — be united in our action; let us say: "We the peoples", inspired by new hope and new momentum, are for a better millennium.

The delegation of Madagascar congratulates you, Mr. President, on your unanimous election to preside over the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, a tribute both to your eminent diplomatic qualities and to your country, Finland.

We also pay tribute to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, for the dedication and determination he displayed in presiding over the fifty-fourth session.

We convey our congratulations to the Secretary-General on his efforts he has made. His actions will benefit all the citizens of the world, who are all anxious to leave deprivation and poverty behind.

I also take this opportunity to thank, from this rostrum, the United Nations, for having adopted resolution 54/96 M of 14 March 2000, as well as all the countries and organizations that helped Madagascar following the cyclone damage at the beginning of this year.

With regard to restructuring the United Nations, it is high time to enact such proposals as enlarging that cornerstone of collective peace that is the Security Council, streamlining the institutional structure to make it work better, and improving the financial structure with a view to a more equitable assessment of contributions. The power of the veto, which in itself constitutes a nullification of democracy, is incompatible with the founding principles of our Organization.

We know that, unfortunately, Africa is a place of perpetual conflict, but a new impetus is manifesting itself in the search for lasting peace and reconciliation.

With regard to the crisis in Comoros, Madagascar respects the position expressed by the Organization for African Unity (OAU) at its thirty-sixth Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held at Lomé. The Antananarivo Agreement of April 1999 remains the viable solution for bringing to an end the separatist crisis in Anjouan, a crisis that was caused by the unconstitutionality of the regime currently in power.

Madagascar welcomes the efforts undertaken in Burundi by President Nelson Mandela in his capacity

as mediator and facilitator. Those efforts led to the signing of the Arusha agreement, which we hope will allow the people of Burundi to be united once again and to find peace and a new impetus for development.

Madagascar has long supported the struggle for self-determination of the Sahraoui people and encourages the implementation of the United Nations Settlement Plan as the only viable mechanism able to resolve the differences between the two parties.

We welcome the outcome of the mediation efforts undertaken by President Ismail Omar Guelleh of the Republic of Djibouti. Thanks to those efforts, Somalia is now beginning to find peace after more than a decade as a non-State. The election by the parliament in Djibouti on 25 August 2000 of Mr. Abdikassim Salad Hassan as the new President is a step towards agreement. The people of Somalia can now embark upon the process of restoring a State of law and civil peace through their own efforts and with the support of the international community.

The desire in recent months for dialogue between the two Koreas is encouraging. We welcome the summit conference held in Pyongyang in June 2000 to discuss peaceful reunification that led to the signing of a joint North-South declaration. The family reunions that took place after half a century of separation were moving, and such meetings should be facilitated in the future. The decision to have the athletes of the North and South march together at the Olympic Games in Sydney reflects a desire for reconciliation.

Madagascar is a peaceful island in the Indian Ocean. Through me, my country reiterates its commitment to carrying out disarmament. We are counting on the implementation of the conventions prohibiting the production, proliferation and illicit sales of weapons of all kinds. On 25 August 1999, Madagascar ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Furthermore, our Parliament's ratification process for the Convention on Biological and Toxin Weapons has begun.

The proliferation of light weapons is one of the causes of the spread of conflict. My country therefore fully supports the convening in 2001 of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations on the illicit trafficking in light weapons in all its aspects.

We pay tribute to the United Nations peace volunteers who were victims of the recent terrorist act of aggression in West Timor. We underscore the need for a joint strategy to deal with the current wave of violence. Thus on 1 October 1999, Madagascar signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings. We look forward to a speedy conclusion of the draft convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism.

Madagascar strongly supports the recommendations of the Brahimi report and looks forward to their effective and speedy implementation so as to strengthen the peacekeeping capacity of our Organization. We should stress the training, equipping and safety of peace volunteers. In this connection, the countries concerned and neighbouring States should make their contributions. Adopting a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention is necessary because the problem needs to be tackled at the source.

Because we support democracy and the observance of human rights and the rights of citizens, Madagascar joined in the decision taken at Algiers in 1999 during the thirty-fifth OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government to condemn the taking of power through unconstitutional means. A resolution of the thirty-sixth Assembly, which was held at Lomé, urges the international community to condemn with one voice such anti-democratic practices and to enact sanctions against regimes that result from such practices.

In the new millennium, let us ensure that children remain at the heart of our collective efforts. The twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, on social development, held in June 2000 at Geneva, emphasized the need to protect children, to inform them of their rights and to educate them fully in order to prepare them for citizenship.

In order to mark the Millennium Summit, on 7 September 2000, Madagascar signed Optional Protocols: one to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and another to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Gender equality is for us an ongoing challenge.

We condemn anything that runs counter to the progress of human beings, and we endorse the common struggle against social scourges and transnational

crime. We also wish to draw attention to the upsurge in such new areas of concern as sex tourism, paedophilia and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Moreover, together with my sister Ministers for Social Affairs, we spoke out in favour of a united struggle against those scourges in a letter to Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

What Africa needs is easier access to care and medications. Without opposing in any way the noble principle of freedom of thought and expression, we deplore the ill effects of any type of physical or moral aggression that is the result of the proliferation of cults, and media representations of obscene and immoral images. In this regard, legal instruments should be designed and implemented to create parameters for the electronic dissemination of material that poses a threat to morality.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The signing by Madagascar on 7 September last of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography attests to our determination to work to safeguard the family unit and family values, which are a source of human dignity and which guarantee stable sustainable social development. In this context, Madagascar adopted a law in 1999 which outlaws paedophilia.

Madagascar has also involved itself in the various stages of the negotiations that led to the adoption and the signing, on 14 September 2000, of the Protocol on Biosafety, the objective of which is to avert the dangers of using genetically modified substances. Madagascar is also against any use of the research relating to the cloning of human beings.

The economic and social difficulties facing my country are made worse by the uncertainty and changes in the international system. We must therefore strengthen international dialogue on the basis of partnership and shared responsibility. We are convinced that the promotion of a culture of peace and of mutual understanding will help bring about a harmonious world. Accordingly, Madagascar supports General Assembly resolution 53/22, which proclaimed 2001 the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

We hope that this session will outline strategies that are consonant with the requirements of development and of human security, in keeping with the plan of action proposed by the Secretary-General in his report.

An overall rethinking of development is necessary, because it is in everyone's interests to increase the purchasing power of the developing countries, so that in the near future they can become equal partners as well as a potential market. We deplore the glaring inequalities that exist today: our peoples are suffering from famine and malnutrition, whereas some others are enjoying amazing overproduction. This imbalance does nothing to promote commercial and financial flows. We therefore support the Millennium Summit Declaration, which proposes the adoption of a duty-free admission policy for products exported by the developing countries, an increase in official development assistance, and the implementation of a debt relief and forgiveness programme.

The holding in May 2001 of the third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries should lead to decisions that ultimately will help to eliminate the least-developed-country category from the scale of world economic values.

Accordingly, we support the principles of self-confidence and of mutual trust in the establishment of a monetary fund — a development fund — and a commodity price stabilization fund. This initiative seeks to both reduce the vulnerability of the developing countries to exogenous factors and to decrease the dependence of our economies on those of the developed countries.

Concerning Africa specifically, regional and continental integration is vital in order to avoid marginalization. In this respect, Madagascar signed the draft Charter of the African Union, which is the expression of the rebirth of a responsible, sovereign Africa.

Important meetings await us in 2001, including the high-level intergovernmental meeting on financing for development and the special session to follow up on the World Summit for Children, which are all opportunities to give real meaning to the commitments undertaken during this Millennium Assembly.

We have come to this historic session convinced that it will breathe new life into our Organization and provide the basis for a dynamic for peace and

cooperation. We have come here because we have confidence in concerted action to meet today's challenges. We have come here because we have hope in a viable future free from need in a world of well-being and peace.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to The Honourable Lilian Patel, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Malawi.

Mrs. Patel (Malawi): At the outset, allow me to join other speakers in congratulating Mr. Harri Holkeri on his election to preside over the Millennium Assembly. I am confident that under his able stewardship we the peoples, and particularly those of us from the developing countries, can look forward with optimism to a highly proactive session of the General Assembly. His election to the presidency is a clear reflection of the confidence which the international community has in his great country, Finland. He can count on the continued support and cooperation of the Malawi delegation in this momentous task.

Let me also pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia, for his highly successful presidency of the fifty-fourth session.

Less than a fortnight ago, our leaders gathered at this very venue to map out the way forward in this millennium. The enthusiasm with which the deliberations were conducted culminated in a highly inspiring outcome document, which gives a clear outline of what needs to be done.

Malawi welcomes the outcome of the Millennium Summit. At the same time, we recognize that the strategic partnership required for the implementation of the outcome document calls for the political commitment of the international community. It is therefore our hope that the enthusiasm with which the world leaders approached the Millennium Summit will translate into genuine political will in the implementation of the measures that were adopted.

Let us all build on the consensus that emerged from the Millennium Summit. Recognition by world leaders of the urgent need to address issues bedevilling humanity today is the first step towards building a prosperous and better tomorrow.

A multiplicity of factors are constraining the efforts of the developing countries towards achieving economic development. There is therefore a need for a multidimensional approach in order to address the plight of these countries. Such efforts must, of necessity, be pursued at both the national and international levels.

Not long ago, Malawi joined other members of the international community in welcoming the process of globalization. We joined the chorus in acknowledging the inevitability of the march towards a global village. In our enthusiasm, we looked forward to meeting the challenges and taking advantage of the opportunities that globalization was envisaged to offer. Today, the experience has proved daunting. A number of constraints dog our march towards the global village.

Along with other sub-Saharan African countries, Malawi has yet to meaningfully enjoy the benefits of modern information technology. We all know that the process of globalization is centred on the swift and accurate flow of information. The interconnectedness which information technology brings about offers the benefits of choice. Those who possess the technological capacity are, hence, ahead of the rest in the march towards the global village.

Malawi therefore calls upon the donor community to level the playing field by assisting those who lack the capacity to meaningfully take advantage of a modern global information network. There is need to close the existing digital divide.

International trade is critical if the economies of most developing countries are to thrive. Malawi's export-oriented economy is, in this regard, no exception. With no mineral wealth of significance, our economy depends almost solely on the export of primary agricultural products and the importation of manufactured goods. The steadily deteriorating barter terms of trade for the primary products has long been a source of concern to us. As if this were not daunting enough, the situation is compounded by the imposition of protectionist measures by countries that offer markets for our exports. A range of non-tariff barriers is being subtly put in place, rendering it difficult for our products to reach those markets. These protectionist measures run counter to the spirit of free trade which we all profess and which we all believe to be necessary for the growing interdependence among

countries. As long as barriers to free trade among countries are erected, global integration will face a serious setback.

Malawi therefore calls upon the development partners to open up their markets to products from the developing countries. Increased market access is one way in which a country like Malawi could be empowered to meaningfully participate in the globalization process.

Time and again, we in the developing countries have expressed serious concern over the existing problem of external debt. Debt servicing has compelled our Governments to divert meagre resources from development programmes. As a result, basic social services and investment in other infrastructure programmes suffer.

We welcome initiatives adopted by the development partners to address the problem of debt. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative is, among other measures, notable. We all looked forward with hope to the recent G-8 Summit held in Okinawa, Japan. However, the lack of commitment to deal with the problem of debt decisively means that the burden still remains virtually intact.

Malawi therefore believes that the only way in which the problem of external debt can meaningfully be addressed is through outright cancellation. We invite our development partners to exercise the political will for debt cancellation. We need to free resources for investment in basic infrastructural services.

Official development assistance and foreign direct investment are necessary if developing economies like Malawi's are to develop. It is largely in recognition of this reality that the United Nations set the target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries for official development assistance. The general decline in official development assistance flows to the developing countries therefore runs counter to the internationally recognized target. We therefore pay tribute to those development partners who have either met or exceeded the 0.7 per cent target. At the same time, we call upon those falling short of it to live up to the expectations of the international community.

Malawi welcomes the trend towards a rise in foreign direct investment over the past few years. However, we observe that, in spite of the steady rise, the distribution itself has been uneven, with sub-Saharan Africa making no meaningful gains. We hope that efforts will be made to address the disparity.

Just over 10 years ago, the Berlin Wall came tumbling down in a highly symbolic move marking the demise of the cold war. All peace-loving people in the world who wanted humankind to live in dignity welcomed that momentous development. The concept of "peace dividend" gained currency as the international community welcomed the opportunity to turn swords into plowshares.

Today's reality has not borne out our expectations. Trouble spots, both long-standing and emerging ones, dot the globe. During the cold war, we blamed conflicts on super-Power rivalry. Yet conflicts today have assumed different dimensions, and they continue to divert meagre national resources away from development programmes.

The protracted civil war in Angola, civil strife in Sierra Leone, the Great Lakes region of Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kosovo and Central Asia, among other areas, perhaps reveal causal factors that we glossed over during the cold war. Greed among politicians and the ruthless pursuit of profit by multinational corporations have, in a number of cases, coalesced to prolong conflict. We have all noted the role that a precious mineral like diamonds can play in unleashing human tragedy.

Malawi welcomes the recent adoption by the United Nations Security Council of a resolution that aims at regulating the trade in diamonds, especially those acquired illegally. The international community can count on our unflinching cooperation in the implementation of the resolution.

We have also noted the untiring efforts of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. However, the lessons of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone, and indeed elsewhere, clearly point to the need for a serious review of the mandate of such missions. The embarrassment that the peacemakers were subjected to is something that, we believe, must not be allowed to happen again. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the recommendations made in the Brahimi Report.

We, at the same time, join the international community in condemning the recent murder of three

United Nations relief workers in West Timor. We call on those responsible to desist from further interfering with the safety and freedom of refugees and humanitarian workers in the region.

Malawi recognizes that the United Nations alone cannot provide miracle solutions to conflicts that rage in the various regions. It is largely incumbent upon the primary players to exercise political maturity and restrain their passions.

We note that in most conflict areas, there exist negotiated frameworks for resolution of the differences. And yet, the sheer lack of political commitment has led the parties to wantonly renege on agreements that they so painstakingly negotiated. We therefore call upon all warring parties to respect existing peace agreements and pool their efforts towards nation-building.

The Government of Malawi welcomes efforts by the United Nations to rid the globe of weapons of mass destruction. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) represent some of the notable efforts by the international community to bring about lasting global peace and security. Malawi would like to express its readiness to join the international community in the adoption of measures that seek to advance the cause of international peace and security.

We waste meagre resources to keep conflict going, while in the process sacrificing the welfare of our people. His Excellency Dr. Bakili Muluzi, President of the Republic of Malawi, time and again decried this, saying that we, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, are too poor to divert meagre resources to sustain conflict.

The above factors present a front which impedes economic development in the developing countries, especially the least developed among them. Investment in basic infrastructure suffers as a result of, directly or otherwise, an interplay of these forces.

As long as the international community holds back the political will needed for decisive action, the playing field will remain uneven. As such, the developing countries will continue to be marginalized in the march towards the global village.

My delegation does not intend to heap all blame on international factors alone. At the national level, we in the developing countries have to take stock of our domestic policies. Malawi, for one, is doing its part in this regard. The democratic governance which the ruling United Democratic Front (UDF) ushered in the country in June 1994 is well on course. The people's confidence in the UDF-led government was manifested when they re-elected it in the June 1999 general elections. In the seven years of its existence, the Government has put in place institutional mechanisms aimed at promoting human rights and other freedoms that form the core of good governance.

Malawi's commitment to the consolidation of democracy is now irreversible. In November this year, the country will take yet another step forward with the conduct of local government elections. We fully recognize the contribution which good governance makes to economic development in a country.

In this regard, I would like to pay tribute to the United Nations and those development partners who have contributed to our effort towards the promotion of good governance. As the process goes on, we shall count on your continued assistance.

We in Malawi further recognize the central role that a vibrant private sector plays in economic development. For long, the previous government in Malawi neglected the private sector, opting, instead, to boost parastatal enterprises.

The new political dispensation has opened up the country to a competitive, free market economy. Inefficient parastatal organizations are falling into private ownership through a privatization programme. Already, there are discernible benefits accruing, most notably marked improvements in the quality of products and services on the domestic market.

The existing political stability and the general warmth of the friendly people of Malawi create an inviting climate to the foreign investor. The Government has, in addition, adopted measures which are aimed at creating a conducive investment environment. We, therefore, welcome entrepreneurs to come and sample the market.

At the core of Malawi's fight against poverty is the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) which the UDF-led Government launched upon its assumption of office. Within the context of the programme, the Government later launched the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF), a bottom-up framework that involves the villager in taking decisions on development

programmes. MASAF is making the difference in the lives of the citizenry. The face of infrastructure in the countryside, where nearly 80 per cent of the country's population resides, has been considerably transformed.

We, therefore, thank the World Bank for the support it is extending to the Malawi Social Action Fund, which is currently in its second phase.

Among other strategies, Malawi has adopted measures aimed at empowering vulnerable groups in society. A systematic programme aimed at empowering women through micro-credit and improved access to education for girls are some of these. A few years ago, the Government established the Ministry of State in the President's Office Responsible for Persons with Disabilities, whose impact is beginning to show.

Our determined efforts to rid the country of excruciating poverty are impeded by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In the last decade, the extent of devastation caused by the pandemic in Malawi has been frightening. By targeting the productive age bracket of the population, HIV/AIDS has clearly begun to reverse the hard-won gains that the nation had made towards the close of the last decade.

At the same time, we are aware of the advances that the West has to date made in the treatment of HIV/AIDS. The prohibitive cost of the drugs precludes developing countries like Malawi from gaining access to them. And yet, these are the countries that are in the greatest need of such therapy, in view of their high incidence of HIV/AIDS.

My delegation appreciates the effort of the United Nations, through the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), to deal with the pandemic. We welcome the fact that the Security Council gave centre stage to HIV/AIDS issues early this year. We believe that the devastation left by the scourge deserves a high international profile. Malawi further calls on those countries with the capacity to make the necessary arrangements to render the drugs affordable for all those who need them.

It is clear that if the international community is to forge the strategic partnership needed for a smooth march towards the global village, we need to level the playing field. This calls for political will on the part of all of us. We need to fulfil our shared responsibilities for the benefit of humankind.

Malawi welcomes the recent admission of Tuvalu as the 189th Member State of the United Nations. On behalf of my Government and the people of Malawi, I extend our support and best wishes to the Government and the people of Tuvalu.

Time and again, Malawi has spoken in favour of granting the Republic of China on Taiwan the role that it deserves in the international community. The hard-working and peace-loving people of Taiwan have clearly demonstrated that they are ready to actively contribute to the goals and ideals for which the United Nations stands.

We therefore appeal to the Organization's membership to look beyond narrow political considerations and face the geopolitical realities that obtain on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. The continued isolation of Taiwan does not bode well for the spirit of globalization, which we all acknowledge, has to be all-inclusive.

Finally, allow me to reaffirm the commitment of the Government of the Republic of Malawi to live up to the obligations enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. This is the only universal body that is well placed to take us all into the millennium.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker is His Excellency The Honourable Lakshman Kadirgamar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Kadirgamar (Sri Lanka): I convey to the President the warmest felicitations of Sri Lanka on his election to the high office of President of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, and I pledge to him Sri Lanka's fullest cooperation and support in his work.

To the Foreign Minister of Namibia, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, I convey Sri Lanka's appreciation and admiration for the masterly manner in which he served as President of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Tuvalu to the membership of the United Nations.

The Millennium Summit is over. I fervently hope that its dreams and hopes for a better world will never fade from the hearts and minds of all mankind. The President of Sri Lanka, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, unable to attend the Summit, conveyed,

through a message I had the honour to read out to the Summit, her hopes and her vision for the future of humanity. Her words were these:

> "Peace among all States and peace among all peoples within States so that all, and not only some, may in safety, without fear, in dignity, without humiliation, in good health, and in material and spiritual well-being enjoy the wonders of life on this miracle we call the planet Earth." (*A/55/PV.7*)

Therefore, the President of Sri Lanka spoke, with emphasis, of the necessity of protecting and preserving, for the future, those minimal and most fundamental certainties that the Member States of the United Nations have been able to establish — in particular, to preserve what was and continues to be the Organization's very foundation: the entity we know as the State. She pointed out that it was in the General Assembly that representatives of Governments, of peoples and of States gather together under a Charter that assures States of their sovereign equality, their political independence and their territorial integrity. These are the fundamentals of the United Nations system.

And this is as it should be. States are the principal organizational entities into which the peoples of this planet have gathered. The principal, overall organizational edifice of the international community is the inter-States system.

For the entity we know as the State, there is no substitute. If States weaken, so will this Organization. If States are diminished, so will this Organization be diminished.

Thus, it was the plea of the President of Sri Lanka that everything possible be done to protect and preserve, and not to decry or endeavour to erode, the stability and the well-being of the entity we know as the State, for whose sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence the Charter gave us its assurance.

Before proceeding any further I should make it clear — in view of recent statements on the part of speakers of obvious goodwill and intentions, but with whose fundamental premises I fundamentally differ — that those who assert the necessity of continued reaffirmation of the sovereignty of the State in terms of the Charter must not be regarded — I repeat, must not be regarded — as having in any way diminished their commitment to the importance of universal adherence to human rights and all that is required for the dignity of the individual. Sri Lanka is deeply committed to the promotion and protection of the human rights of its own people and of all peoples everywhere.

There is, however, a substantial body of opinion, within which Sri Lanka includes itself, which is of the view that the way to proceed in the matter of human rights and the dignity of the individual is properly through continued and close cooperation between all States, while respecting the sovereignty of each. The way of multilateralism or globalization, which appear expressly or by implication to overlook or diminish the sovereignty of States, is not, to many of us in this Hall, a commendable course. It is not a course whose worthiness in practice has as yet been established. Indeed, most endeavours to overlook or diminish the sovereignty of States have often had disastrous consequences. With that initial clarification and a reminder that human rights are for the observance not only of States, but non-State entities as well, I shall proceed with the remainder of my address.

We must bear in mind that the entities we know as States are national and international corporate entities of enormous complexity, differing in so many respects from corporate entities of the private sector and, of course, differing as well from those innumerable entities, in their thousands now, to which we refer, broadly and benignly, but somewhat simplistically, as civil society.

If the management of a developed State with more than adequate resources at its command is a complex undertaking, how much more complex would be the management of a developing State without such resources and such infrastructures? Then there are those developing States such as Sri Lanka, with their multi-ethnic, multireligious societies where the legacies of centuries of a colonial past take more than one generation to erase.

Aside from the pressures inherent in the very nature and history of a State, let us not forget the additional external pressures a State is subject to — economic, social and political, legitimate and illegitimate, civil and uncivil, and often criminal — that the age of information and its consequences have brought in their wake. These are external pressures that raise troubling uncertainties for many States and for

developing States in particular, that are without the blessings of abundant resources and advanced infrastructures. These are uncertainties that strain the structures of States and could come close to threatening their very existence.

Where the processes of globalization are exploited to their advantage by the irresponsible or the illegitimate or the criminal, one is reminded of the report from the Secretariat received by this Assembly three years ago which drew attention to the threat to Government authority and civil society, to law and order and to legitimate economic and political institutions posed by transnational networks of crime, narcotics, money laundering and terrorism having access to sophisticated information technologies and weaponry.

Of course, where there is the use of internal armed force against a State, as in my country, the complexities within a State compound themselves many times over, and we know that the use of armed force against a State is the greatest threat of all to its preservation and well-being. This is particularly so in democracies, whose very openness makes them most vulnerable; and Sri Lanka is a democracy of long-standing and unwavering commitment to democratic fundamentals.

Peace among States, the primary purpose of the Charter, has to a large extent been achieved, if not in fact in every case, at least in general, and in terms of generally observed rules of international law, under and pursuant to Charter provisions that proscribe the use of armed force by one State against another State, except in self-defence or as authorized by the Security Council.

Yet when we turn to peace within States, and the use of armed force against a State internally, we see an entirely different, and an often confusing and frustrating, picture. Each armed conflict is unique, each a creature of its own history, the nature of each determined by its own surroundings. There is no simplicity of circumstance, no uniformity in scenario, no easy solution. Internal armed conflicts come in many different forms.

The relatively clear-cut format of a United Nations response to inter-State armed conflicts — monitoring a truce and keeping the peace after an agreed cessation of hostilities — seems, for internal armed conflicts, inadequate or inapplicable.

The Charter does not prescribe how this Organization should proceed in cases of internal armed conflicts, except for the wise admonition in Article 2, paragraph 7, which says,

> "Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State."

In view of the varieties, complexities and intricacies of internal armed conflicts, this Organization appears to be without the necessary structure, the knowledge, expertise, experience and resources — and often, it would seem — without the necessary collective will.

To suggest that the United Nations should intervene in internal armed conflicts across the board — a suggestion made, on occasion, by persons of obvious goodwill but with little knowledge of local circumstances — is wishful thinking of the most simplistic kind, and incorrect in the extreme.

A proposition of such a nature ignores the fundamental premise, indeed the truism, articulated so impressively to the Millennium Summit by the head of State of Algeria, President Bouteflika, in his summation of the deliberations of round table four: that a democracy, offering to all its peoples the fundamental necessities of peaceful, all-inclusive political processes, simply cannot tolerate armed defiance of the democratically expressed will of the populace of a State, which an armed terroristic attack on a democratic State so obviously constitutes.

At a more practical level, where would this Organization — woefully under-financed for the fulfilment of its development objectives, which billions around this world expectantly await — obtain the further resources for such far-flung interventions in internal domestic crises.

Charter provisions and United Nations practice affirm that a State may act in individual or collective self-defence should there be an armed attack across its frontiers. Yet, against massive internal armed attack, the abilities of most States — or at least the abilities of most developing States — to react with equivalent armed force in self-defence, or in enforcement of the law of the land, or in the maintenance of law and order, are very limited. Traditional police services are inadequate in design, in training, in equipment and in

experience. Few States have ready and affordable access to the necessary information or intelligence. Few States are able to maintain military infrastructures effective against heavily armed guerrilla-type onslaughts and the horrors of terror.

Such has been the experience of my country. Sri Lanka has for many years had within its territory an armed conflict that has complicated the lives of the entire population of the country. It is a conflict of an extraordinary nature. A very small group of armed fighters and supporters — numbering less than 15,000 persons in total, schooled in and totally devoted to violence, rejecting the processes of peaceful society and participatory governance, achieving, through the practice of systematic terror, national and international notoriety, rebuffing all overtures for settlement of such problems as they may have through dialogue — continues, in defiance of law and order, in rebellion against the State to fight for the establishment of a separate, monolingual, mono-ethnic State in our territory.

A democratic State, because of its openness, its laws, traditions and practices and its commitment to tolerance and dissent, is especially vulnerable to the deployment of force against it by any group within its boundaries. An internal armed challenge to any State anywhere is a challenge to all States everywhere. Unless all States, democratic States in particular, agree to come to the aid of a State in such peril, democracy itself will be imperilled everywhere. Democracy will not survive.

When the security and integrity of one State is threatened by an armed group within it, surely — especially in these contemporary times, with the cold war far behind us — it behoves all other States to deny that armed group any encouragement, any succour, any safe haven. Today, for the prosecution of terrorist activities in one country, massive funds are raised with impunity in other countries, often through knowing or unknowing front organizations or other entities that now proliferate in many forms and in many countries, and often, sadly, in the guise of charitable groups or groups ostensibly concerned with human rights or ethnic, cultural or social matters.

The magnitude of the collection of funds abroad for terrorist purposes, and the extensiveness of the reach of the international networks developed for that purpose, boggle the mind. Their receipts seem to exceed the receipts of many transnational conglomerates — all free of tax. Revenues come, of course, from the customary illegal trade in drugs, arms or other merchandise, including the smuggling of humans.

But there also exists a far more abundant and seemingly limitless reservoir of funds — namely, expatriates of similar ethnicity settled abroad. As the western media has reported over the past few years from time to time, collections from expatriates abroad for the armed group known as the Tamil Tigers, which is battling the Government of Sri Lanka, are staggering in their magnitude: for example, $400,000 a month from one country; $600,000 a month from another; $2.7 million a month from yet another; and large additional funds from expatriates in still other countries.

In 1988 an excellent study was published on financial havens, banking secrecy and money laundering, a study by experts in the field, commissioned by the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention. In order to implement adequately the provisions of the recently adopted International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, a study of a similar nature by United Nations bodies on the collection of external funds for massive, continuous internal armed rebellion against a State, such as occurs in Sri Lanka, becomes especially necessary when the armed group battling a State is in blatant violation of the human rights and humanitarian norms and standards — including those relating to children and to children in armed conflict — that this Organization so correctly and so diligently espouses as the minimal contemporary requirements in human society.

I proposed such a study at the fourth round table of the Millennium Summit, and that proposal was endorsed by our Chairman, President Bouteflika of Algeria, in his summation to the General Assembly of the proceedings of our round table. I urge that the international community give favourable consideration to that proposal.

As the years go by, and the armed conflict fuelled by such massive funds from abroad continues within a State, paradoxically, international perceptions seem to blur, not only among those in civil society, who are often uninformed, but even on the part of those in positions of international authority, within and outside

this Organization who should know better. The existence of the internal armed conflict and the resulting casualties are bemoaned, and a cessation of hostilities is urged at any price, in seeming inattention to the fundamental fact that it is the armed internal group that is the aggressor and it is the State that is the victim.

Such a blurring of international perceptions in many quarters as to what the crucial facts are, is distressing, and profoundly disappointing, to those, such as we in Sri Lanka, who have struggled hard, and continue to struggle hard, to preserve our democratic way of life and the richness of our multi-ethnic, multireligious culture in the pluralistic tolerance we were once so blessed to enjoy.

I hope that the thoughts that I have expressed today on the nature of the affairs of States, and of the affairs of developing States in the main, will show in some measure why a sympathetic, rather than an adversarial, style is by far preferable in relation to the affairs of States, as in all human relationships.

At a more general level, I would like, before I move on from this part of my statement, to refer to two other relevant questions: the role of the General Assembly and the role of civil society in the affairs of the United Nations. The General Assembly is the only principal organ of the United Nations in which all Member States are represented, and the only principal organ whose terms of reference allow for consideration of any matter within the scope of the Charter.

Yet there is the perception among some that the centre of gravity in decision-making on questions of major policy importance to the Organization appears to have moved away from the General Assembly to an extent unknown in earlier years. Sri Lanka greatly welcomes, therefore, the reaffirmation in paragraph 30 of the Millennium Declaration of the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations, and the commitment of all nations to enable the General Assembly to play that role effectively. The practical manner in which the General Assembly could play that role will, of course, require very careful thought.

The ways in which "civil society", and the innumerable entities that that expression encompasses, could best contribute to the work of the United Nations — in terms of data collection, research and analysis and expertise — in a manner that does not prejudice the role of States in the affairs of the United Nations, will also require most careful examination. Such contributions should be made in a manner that is not partial or partisan, in favour of or against, but, rather, in a manner that befits an objective and neutral consultant.

Moreover, although civil society within a national context could be, and is, well accommodated in domestic political processes, the manner in which civil society could be internationally accommodated within United Nations processes still remains a puzzle.

As in all human relationships, so also amongst States: the strong do better than the weak, the rich better than the poor, the developed better than the developing. This is the case most of all when times are hard. The marked decline in official development assistance, and the failure of most of the strong, the rich and the developed to meet their official development assistance pledges, show that for States, there is no general safety net.

If there is one message from the Millennium Summit, and one that is now coming from this Millennium Assembly loud and clear, it is that globalization may be a reality for all, but that it is that no panacea for all — certainly not for the developing world. The benefits of globalization have by-passed much of the developing world. The poorest among us, spanning the continents of Africa, Central America and Asia, have experienced increasing marginalization. There is little opportunity for developing countries to be formative in the shaping of the world economy for the future — in the deliberations that really matter.

Thus, although we are leaving the past century and the past millennium behind us, and celebrate their passing, more than half of humanity is still haunted by the old, intractable economic and social tragedies that have been with us since the dawn of time: poverty, illiteracy, ill health, hunger, unemployment, the problems of the young, uncontrolled urbanization and the growth of mega-cities.

Among these, poverty alleviation and poverty elimination remain for most of us in the developing world the highest and, in fact, the only, meaningful priority. Poverty degrades humanity and, in an era of abundance and conspicuous consumption, visible in real time across billions of television screens throughout the world, undermines the very foundations

necessary for the growth of humane societies and refined governance.

The developing world needs to be accorded an adequate formative voice in the formulation of a new development chapter for the twenty-first century. Thus we turn to the United Nations and, in ultimate recourse, as it were, to this General Assembly, under whose active supervisory authority there must be a revival of a comprehensive North-South development dialogue — a dialogue that seems to be fading away.

To tell the countless starving and helpless millions that a free global marketplace will show us the way is, I am sorry to say, simply not enough.

Resource deprivation over many generations and its debilitating consequences on adequate infrastructural growth has severely damaged the capacity of developing countries to cope with the modern world.

A new development chapter must provide for the catastrophic negative contingencies, be they "man-made" or otherwise, including such occurrences as the present surge in the price of oil to the highest levels in a decade that now place crushing burdens on the national economies of developing countries struggling desperately to contend with economic realities. They, like Sri Lanka, can only hope and pray that the oil-producing countries, which are certainly not insensitive to the plight of the developing world, will find it possible in some way to relieve such pressures in the very near future.

I should also wish at this juncture in my address to say a word about the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) of the seven States of South Asia — Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka — a body which is deeply committed to the advancement of the economic and social well-being of our peoples, numbering now in the region of 1.25 billion, not merely through national endeavour, but through regional and international cooperation. Sri Lanka, as the current Chair of SAARC, is seeking to implement the programme of activities laid down at the 1991 Colombo summit as best it can in difficult circumstances. The people of our region are deeply committed to the goals of SAARC. They continue to interact vigorously on a wide range of professional, cultural, educational and social activities, notwithstanding the temporary setback to high-level political involvement that SAARC has suffered at this time. We in SAARC are confident that it will not be long before our movement is again able to play its full role in the welfare of our peoples.

I have just returned to New York from the International Conference on War-Affected Children, organized so successfully by the Government of Canada and held at Winnipeg.

I cannot conclude my address to the General Assembly this year without making at least a brief reference to the abominable crimes that are being committed against young Tamil children in Sri Lanka by the rebel group known as the Tamil Tigers. They have been, and are, forcibly conscripting even 10-year-old children, boys and girls, for battle against the Sri Lankan Army. Some of these children have been programmed into suicide bombers. They are forced to wear cyanide capsules round their necks and to bite on them to evade capture. This wretched practice continues unabated.

In 1998, at the invitation of my Government, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, visited Sri Lanka and met some of the Tamil Tiger leaders. They assured him that they would not recruit any person under the age of 17 and would not send into battle any person below the age of 18. A few months ago he stated that since his visit to Sri Lanka there have been continuous reports of the recruitment and the use of children by the Tamil Tigers. The assurance they gave him has been totally dishonoured. In a poignant answer to a question by an interviewer, the Special Representative said this:

> "Children who become soldiers lose their innocence. Part of the reason why the fighting groups will tend to reach out to children is because, of course, the adults may become disillusioned, they may be killed off, they may run away, so they reach the children who are less able to defend themselves. But there's a more cynical reason than that: children, because they are innocent, can be moulded into the most unquestioning, ruthless tools of warfare, into suicide commandos, into committing the worst atrocities. In other situations, it is ideology — come fight for the homeland, come fight for our ethnic group, come fight for a new society — that may appeal to families and to children. So there

are many reasons which facilitate the abuse of children in this way."

I thank the Special Representative for having had the courage to speak out on this important issue. To remain silent in the face of such criminality is to encourage and condone it. It is the duty of all of us who care about the children of the world to rally against the cruelty, brutality and the grievous harm cynically inflicted on them by groups such as the one that abuses them in Sri Lanka. A few months ago, the representative of the United Nations Children's Fund in Sri Lanka told journalists — and I thank him for his statement — that the situation of children in the areas held by the Tamil Tigers had worsened since they gave their assurance to the United Nations Special Representative. Parents have reported that their children have been recruited. It is a serious problem. He observed that until they, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), announce to their own people that they have taken measures to prevent children below 17 years from being recruited, we cannot take their promises seriously.

A respected and courageous human rights group in Sri Lanka, consisting mostly of Tamil teachers who used to teach at Jaffna University, have said in a recent report that since last May a fresh child-recruitment campaign has been launched by the Tamil Tigers. According to their report, children as young as 10 years are being forcibly conscripted, age being no consideration as long as the child was able to carry a gun. In recent days and months the international press has focused sharply on the plight of child soldiers in Sri Lanka.

A few days ago Sri Lanka deposited its instrument of ratification of the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This Protocol has noted that the Statute of the International Criminal Court makes conscripting, enlisting or using children in combat a war crime in both international and non-international armed conflicts. It holds non-State actors also accountable for such crimes and it calls upon State parties to cooperate in preventing and combating such crimes.

Accordingly, today, in this General Assembly of the United Nations Sri Lanka calls upon all States to ratify this Protocol, and it calls upon the State parties on whose territory the LTTE has offices and front organizations to take strong punitive action against such establishments, and to declare the LTTE a criminal organization, as the LTTE sustains its criminal activity in respect of the use of child soldiers through funds generated on the territories of other State parties, which are obliged to cooperate in terms of the Convention and the Protocol.

The Winnipeg Conference ended yesterday with an impassioned plea to the world to move urgently from words to deeds, to save the hundreds of thousands of children who are abused, maimed, displaced, traumatized and killed by war. In our cruel world if anything should stir the conscience of mankind it is surely the plight of these children. Let it not be said that yet again we have failed — failed to hear and heed the anguished cry of children in distress, children on whom adults have inflicted, and continue to inflict, unspeakable cruelty. No, politics cannot divide us on the issue of child soldiers. Massive funds are not required to save them. What is required is the will and the commitment to act of those States which are in a position to act. The Winnipeg appeal is addressed to them. Let us all wholeheartedly support that appeal now so that when the special session of the General Assembly for Follow-up to the World Summit for Children is held here in New York next September, we will be able to adopt practical measures that will finally ensure that children will be forever protected from the ravages of war.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I call on His Excellency Mr. Didier Opertti, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay and former President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Opertti (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin by thanking the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for his work as President of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, during which he continued and concluded the preparation process of the recent Millennium Summit, initiated during the preceding session.

Likewise, I extend to the President of the Assembly at the fifty-fifth session, Mr. Harri Holkeri, former Prime Minister of Finland, our congratulations and best wishes for the success of his tenure.

We also extend a fraternal welcome to Tuvalu as a new Member of the United Nations.

A little over a week ago the United Nations held its Millennium Summit. To be more precise, we held our Millennium Summit. The work of the Secretary-General and of the Member States deserves our praise, for the result of their efforts was wholly positive. We should all congratulate ourselves on that very successful work, but the task assigned to us by the Summit is now in our hands. It should begin with an assessment and careful evaluation of agreements, disagreements and priorities.

Above all, we should pay special attention to the statements made by our heads of State and Government, as well as to the oral summary reports by each of the Presidents of the four round tables. Taken as a whole, this constitutes rich background material on which we could, and should, work. One could say that the General Assembly, as a universal and independent body, has been entrusted with a mandate by the highest political leaders of the Member States. Interpreting and carrying out that mandate is now the main objective of our work in the General Assembly.

Of course, the Secretary-General's report (A/54/2000), known by the opening words of its title, "We the peoples", is an essential contribution, widely appreciated at this time of putting the Organization in perspective. For that reason, the Secretary-General deserves our sincere acknowledgement.

We can therefore say that never before have we had more authoritative or exact guidelines. As the Secretary-General said in his opening statement, the responsibility for putting those directives into practice is in our hands; in other words, in the non-exclusive framework of the General Assembly.

From the very start of our renewed task we must try to identify some central ideas that reflect a general consensus on our point of departure, while acknowledging that neither the Summit nor any similar United Nations meetings will be able to make any arbitrary changes to the items on the world's agenda or alone bring about the alterations that practically all of us view as necessary and inevitable.

It is therefore a matter of using the Millennium Summit as a launching platform for the achievement of the common objectives of the international community, whose main quality should be to reflect the basic rights and interests of all its members. We should, then, be as careful in identifying those goals as we are in selecting the procedures and determining the time required to achieve them. In any case, there are some realities that we cannot, and should not, evade.

The first is the acknowledgement that the so-called globalization or universalization phenomenon constitutes the inescapable environment to which the human family should adapt, not from a stance of confrontation or resigned acceptance, but in order to be an active part of it. By living within the framework of globalization we will be in a position to direct and channel it, accepting its intrinsic values in its scientific and technological dimension, while conferring upon it the necessary inspiration and political will to control its negative effects on societies that lack the necessary resources to be part of globalization and to benefit from it.

It has been said here at the Assembly that we should attempt to make it possible for all States to climb aboard the globalization train. That goal should motivate our individual actions and our cooperation efforts in the immediate future.

As was repeatedly emphasized during the Summit, United Nations action of the kind I have described would have an encouraging and positive effect, especially since no other international institution has undertaken that task. Given the universal and all-inclusive nature of globalization, it is appropriate to consider what action the United Nations could take from the perspective of evolution and change of the international system in its three principal areas: first, the institutional political system — the Organization itself and its powers; secondly, the global financial system established by the Bretton Woods Agreements; and, finally, the organization of international trade within the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

With regard to the first, it must be admitted that in the process of reform of the Security Council, to which we have devoted so much effort, no significant progress has been registered recently. It would appear that the international community has not yet sufficiently assimilated its will to change at the institutional level. That admission does not take away from the fact that the reform of the Council is a pending matter and one which, as the round table reports indicated, received particular attention from the heads of State and Government at the Millennium Summit.

It seems to us that on this matter we have reached a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, there is practically a consensus on the need to reform the Council so that it can — on the basis of certain principles held very dear by the international community — more adequately reflect current reality, being made more democratic in its spirit, more representative in its structure and more transparent in its functioning. On the other hand, however, some believe that the formula proposed to achieve the goal of expanding the Council — an increase in both permanent and non-permanent members — disregards the very principles that we seek to implement. We have thus responded to the need felt by all for reform of the Council, in order to make it more representative and democratic, with formulas that do not yet appear to reflect the requisite universal spirit of reform.

That is why we believe that, while we continue our efforts to reorganize the Security Council, we must also explore alternative solutions avoiding the approaches — perhaps too simplistic — adopted so far, which have not made progress possible, even after eight years of intensive negotiations. New approaches and ideas are needed in the reform of the Council more than in any other problem.

Peacekeeping and international security continues to be a core issue giving the United Nations its specific character and, to a certain degree, its reason for being. The Organization's peacekeeping and international security mechanisms, the limits within which they can operate and their modalities have been on our agenda since the founding of the United Nations. They continue to require our attention, because problems of peace and international security manifest themselves in varying and sometimes unexpected ways as the world political situation evolves.

The United Nations is now confronted with the worrisome problem of how to achieve its peacekeeping goals with limited resources and inadequate mechanisms. The report on peace operations prepared by a group of experts, known as the Brahimi report and drafted at the request of the Secretary-General, will undoubtedly help us find a way to overcome the difficulties now facing the Organization in this area. Uruguay, since 1952 a traditional contributor to peacekeeping operations, is carefully considering the recommendations contained in the Brahimi report, many of which we deem worthy of our support.

In any event, we warmly welcome the initiatives aimed at a more in-depth consideration of what has been termed "humanitarian intervention". We hope that a detailed and objective examination of this concept by the Organization will enable us to grasp its true scope and implications and to find ways of integrating it harmoniously into the international legal order, without any kind of distortion.

The financing of peacekeeping operations requires the prudent management of existing resources and, as with the regular budget, it that all Member States fulfil their financial obligations to the Organization, without conditions. Likewise, the institutionalization of the current scale of assessments is vital, perhaps with a few small changes that would not create problems for developing or least developed countries and that would ensure that States shoulder their responsibility according to their real capacity to pay.

This is also our position on the regular budget. We cannot accept that, in determining the scale of assessments, simplistic formulas should be used that are based only on isolated economic indicators such as per capita income, which do not reflect the real economic situation of the country and of its population.

We cannot overemphasize the link between the question of disarmament and that of development financing. The fact that the majority of violent conflicts occur in the developing sector of the world, in which there are often too many weapons and too few schools, remains a shameful paradox. We must continue to work towards disarmament. That is why my country, Uruguay, supports the convening of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, set to take place next year.

Uruguay also supports the efforts of the "New Agenda" countries towards the elimination of nuclear weapons and encourages the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear- Test-Ban Treaty.

As concerns the international financial system — the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank — and its handling of the recent, recurrent crisis situations in the world, shortcomings were noted in its methods of operation. In particular, its failure to anticipate those crises has made clear the need to update and reform the system directly responsible for ensuring global economic governance. In this effort to reorganize the financial institutions and to coordinate

their activities with those of the United Nations and its agencies, we should also consider the common aspiration of the majority of the members of the international community to democratize the decision-making processes in those organizations. The close connection between the decisions by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and the social and economic realities of countries, more than justifies this aspiration.

Inequality, poverty and debt in the developing world are problems that have been, and continue to be, emphasized in the debates of the Millennium Assembly. These problems require not only ongoing programmes and actions but, above all, a basic sense of solidarity, which does not always characterize our cooperation efforts.

In the same vein, two noteworthy ideas were put forward during the Summit that we believe should be considered, because they could offer some guidance in efficiently addressing economic issues. The first is the idea of creating a development council that is neither dependent nor subordinate and that has the authority to take the decisions necessary to adjust and direct complex international financial flows, since the trends and developments in that respect affect the economies of all States.

The second is related to international trade. In this regard, the international community is firmly convinced that international trade must be made increasingly open and free. The President of Uruguay, Mr. Jorge Batlle Ibañez, in his address to the Summit and in the relevant round table, emphasized the indivisible nature of freedom, as a whole that cannot be separated from free trade.

As trade is a natural and traditional method of communication among peoples, Member States must not impose protectionist barriers to its free flow, which would delay development and therefore affect the well-being of peoples. This could also lead to serious social problems, which in many cases could spiral out of control. In this way, obstacles to trade, discriminatory trade policies and protectionism could become factors of political instability at the domestic and international levels. This is the position of Uruguay within the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), in the relationship between MERCOSUR and the Andean Community, in the Free Trade Area of the Americas and in the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The strong argument to that effect put forward at the Summit must not be disregarded by those Member States that singly or together selectively raise protectionist barriers in order selfishly to defend their own production and participation in the market, denying others what President Batlle has called

> "our right to create and produce and our right to offer and sell what is produced".

In this regard, I cannot but welcome the initiative of the Government of Italy, announced by its Prime Minister during the Summit, to insist, within international organisms — including within the Group of 8 — on the need for the developed countries to open their markets to the least developed countries by abolishing quotas and tariffs.

Nor can the WTO cannot turn a deaf ear to this call. Although it does not play a major role in global financial governance, its regulations affect trade in its broadest sense, and it still counts among its responsibilities, set out at the Uruguay Round and in the Marrakesh agreements, the regulation of trade in agricultural products, which affects many of our countries, particularly those of Latin America and Africa.

Today no one could doubt the role of the United Nations in the gradual process of achieving equality in the world. But the United Nations does not bear sole responsibility in this respect; the Member States and Governments do as well.

A solid and hopeful future for the international community will depend on our good judgement and integrity. Also at stake is the trust of our peoples and of public opinion. Fortunately, for those of us who practise the democratic creed, that trust is always time-bound and subject to public opinion.

Our ability to work within the Organization will determine whether the Millennium Summit that just took place will breathe new life into the United Nations. The world needs to see itself reflected in the institutions it established, with hope and participation, with responsibility and a will to build a fairer, more predictable, more peaceful and more humane society.

I therefore believe — and this is merely a suggestion — that it is essential for all of us to ensure that the Assembly is accorded the important role assigned to it in the Charter, even though reality sometimes does not allow for this. We must ensure that

the Assembly and the Secretariat establish as soon as possible a working group or a similar mechanism that would follow up on the Millennium Summit and would examine the wealth of ideas put forward by our heads of State to ensure that they can be implemented and put into practice. Only in that way will the Millennium Summit be remembered.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Clifford Mamba, head of the delegation of Swaziland.

Mr. Mamba (Swaziland): Mr. President, on behalf of the delegation of His Majesty King Mswati III, Her Majesty the Indlovukazi and the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Swaziland, may I extend hearty congratulations to Mr. Harri Holkeri of the Republic of Finland on his election as President of this fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I also wish to pay my country's rich tribute to Mr. Holkeri's predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia, for his exemplary stewardship of the last session of the General Assembly.

The Kingdom of Swaziland continues to develop quietly and peacefully, according to the wishes of our people. Against a backdrop of difficult economic circumstances, we have declared the year 2000 our Year of Delivery in a number of key economic, social and political areas. In the coming weeks, the Commission that is reviewing the national Constitution will complete its work, and we look forward to receiving its report. Those recommendations will be the result of an extensive and all-inclusive process of consultations and will reflect precisely the wishes of the entire Swazi nation. We believe this national exercise will further enhance the unity of the Swazi people and provide the best possible foundation for our continuing peace and stability.

On the economic front, we continue to make every effort to achieve sustainable growth and to reduce the level of poverty among our people. In addition to encouraging both local and foreign investment, the Government this year launched an ambitious programme of initiatives called the Millennium Project, targeting the tourism and manufacturing industry subsectors. This project is designed to maximize the potential of the Kingdom in these areas and to reduce the current unacceptably high level of unemployment, which is threatening to undermine all our best efforts at development.

Among the many challenges we face as a developing nation, there is no question that the HIV/AIDS crisis presents the most serious threat to our hopes of improving the lives of our people. In the last years of the twentieth century, much of the progress we have achieved in 32 years of independence in social welfare is being reversed by the rapid spread of this most terrible disease. HIV/AIDS represents the single most important issue facing our nation today, and we desperately need the support of the international community in our efforts to contain the threat to our very existence as a nation. We look to the United Nations to take a much stronger leadership role in this global crisis, and to help us to mobilize resources to reverse the catastrophic spread of the pandemic.

During the Millennium Summit, the Kingdom of Swaziland joined other developing countries in expressing concern at the negative effects of globalization on our economies, especially in the context of the widening gap between the rich and the poor countries. We are, however, reassured by Summit's agreement to take measures to ensure that global trends such as globalization should have at their heart the principle of equitable benefit for all nations, regardless of size, level of development or economic strength.

Thus, in recent years, we have waited with great expectation to benefit from initiatives, particularly in the area of preferential trade access, that have been broadcast by our international friends and partners as measures that are designed to help the developing world to overcome the negative effects of globalization.

My delegation is optimistic, therefore, that the recently concluded Millennium Summit will indeed serve as an historic occasion of strengthening international peace and security, as well as the prosperity of our people, in order to establish a fair international order. Beginning with this session, what remains for all of us now is to see to it that the wishes of the founding fathers of the United Nations are fulfilled. Those wishes, ambitious as they may be, are not unreachable and can be achieved. This session, therefore, has the task of setting the pace for the dialogue that lies ahead. Both the Millennium Summit and this session of the General Assembly will have a

direct impact on the success of the United Nations in achieving the goals set by those great visionary leaders.

Since the last session of the General Assembly, the Organization has held several global conferences. However, the implementation of commitments in some cases is regrettably slow. One of the priorities for the United Nations should be an effective, integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of all these conferences. The implementation should be further enhanced within the existing machinery of the United Nations through improving its functions.

Peace-building is a prevention task of growing importance. With the disaster that befell the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the United Nations is facing one of the most comprehensive tasks in its history, which perhaps has made the need to review peacekeeping operations more imperative. We remain concerned about the serious negative impact of the proliferation of conflicts in the world, particularly in Africa, on development capacity and on progress towards economic, social and political transformation. The situation in those countries affected by conflicts is appalling and deserves the Organization's urgent attention.

In Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Sierra Leone and Angola, among others, have been the scene of terrible turmoil, mass murders, destruction of property and much suffering on the part of refugees over the years. The Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have done much to contain and resolve some of these conflicts; and the United Nations has also rendered its support. While some progress has been made in resolving some of these conflicts, much still needs to be done, especially by the parties involved. The latter have a responsibility to observe agreements concluded and must work closely together with the United Nations and the regional organizations involved so that peace processes can be brought to a successful conclusion.

With regard to the Middle East, we are encouraged by the continued efforts by President Clinton and other leaders to bring both Israel and Palestine to the negotiating table. We are hopeful that a long-lasting solution, which has eluded the region for so long, will be found soon.

There is now more than ever a pressing need to finally carry out the long overdue substantial reform of the Security Council. The Council must fully recognize the new realities of the global landscape. It must have a more representative composition, and above all, it must be equipped to react to the crises and conflicts of today. Reform must involve enlargement to include both more permanent and non-permanent members, as well as strengthening its decision-making powers.

The Kingdom of Swaziland unreservedly supports both the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Group positions in as far as the review of the composition and working methods of the Security Council is concerned. We do trust that the ongoing debate in the working group set up for this purpose will continue and that it will yield the much-expected results. The stage which the negotiations have now reached is such that it requires the commitment of all Member States if indeed the Security Council is to be equipped with all the tools it needs to be equitably representative. Participation of the United Nations membership at large in the decision-making process, transparency in its work and imposition of Charter restraints on the veto, with the aim of its eventual abolition, are indispensable imperatives.

The enhancement of the relevance of the United Nations requires, first and foremost, strengthening the role and increasing the efficiency of the General Assembly through focusing its deliberations on contemporary challenges and problems facing the world, engaging it in timely and effective decision-making to address global economic and political issues and enabling it to seriously examine and effectively react to the work of the other organs of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council. In this context, we believe that the General Assembly, as the sole democratic universal and transparent organ, is the proper forum to carry out an in-depth analysis of the implications of the emerging debates on collective action.

The Kingdom of Swaziland joins others in welcoming the Republic of Tuvalu as a new member of the Organization. The addition of Tuvalu brings closer to fruition the hope of the founding fathers to see a United Nations comprised of all the countries of the world. The United Nations is the only body that deals with all fields of human activity. It has been a catalyst of many initiatives that have improved the lives of peoples across the world.

In the same spirit of universality in which we welcome Tuvalu, the Kingdom of Swaziland wishes to reiterate its appeal to the United Nations regarding the question of the Republic of China on Taiwan. The Kingdom of Swaziland has in the past been in the forefront arguing in favour of the readmission of the Republic of China on Taiwan, and our position remains unchanged. The case for including the Republic of China on Taiwan in the activities of the United Nations and its associated agencies takes on even greater relevance in the light of the peaceful transition of Government following the successful expression of the wishes of the people of Taiwan in the elections earlier this year.

Those 23 million people rightly consider it unacceptable that they are not represented in the one Organization that should be truly global, and that they deserve a review of the special circumstances surrounding their bid. The Republic of China on Taiwan has shown time and again its willingness to participate in efforts to bring about true global peace, development and stability, and we believe that the rest of the world is poorer for being denied their involvement. The Kingdom of Swaziland believes that this new millennium provides the perfect opportunity to raise this issue and to restore the right of the people of the Republic of China on Taiwan to participate fully in the activities of our Organization.

There is no alternative to the United Nations. Its objectives and values are universal. We must spare no effort in seeing to it that the United Nations continues to meet the current and evolving needs of its entire membership. It must become the core instrument of effective and fair global governance, if it is to be completely transformed to be what its founding fathers had envisaged.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chad.

Mr. Annadif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): It was by unanimous vote that our Assembly elected our President to be in charge of our work. Whereas we are already aware of his professional skills and his human qualities, may I take the liberty of congratulating him and assuring him of the support and the cooperation of the delegation of Chad to assist him in performing this difficult but very inspiring task.

His predecessor, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of fraternal Namibia, very tactfully and effectively guided the work which was entrusted to him during the fifty-fourth session. He is now deserving of our congratulations.

Our words of congratulations and our encouragement are likewise addressed to our brother, Mr. Kofi Annan, whose devotion to the cause of peace and development in the world undoubtedly represents a guarantee for the success of our Organization.

Last year during a visit to the headquarters of the United Nations Development Programme in New York, the President of the Republic of Chad, His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby, declared:

> "A new world is being built before our very eyes. New standards are being set which are giving lasting shape to the behaviours of individuals and relations among States. New technologies are pressing us forward to even greater progress in those societies which possess them. Those which are closed to change are being marginalized, since they are incapable of making their ambitions come to life in the context of the new world. This frightening prospect, since it is synonymous with being left behind, is very real for many developing countries. But, I reject this prospect for my country."

The President of the Republic is here referring specifically to a world which is in constant change because of rampant globalization, which has become a fact of life that is sometimes highly praised for its benefits and sometimes shunned because of the harm it does. Meanwhile in Chad, men and women are doing everything they can to derive benefit from globalization and to avoid the downside in order not to miss the train of political, economic, social and technological progress.

In other words, faced with the threat that globalization represents to stability, security and development of the weaker, Chad is waging an out and out struggle to occupy its proper place in the concert of nations.

Yes, the men and women of Chad are struggling courageously and with resolve to emerge from obscurantism, from poverty and from domination. The results of their daily struggle speak for themselves when you look at what has been achieved in the various

areas of national life. Politically, the democratic experiment which began on 1 December 1990 is being further developed and consolidated. Thus, political pluralism is functioning while respecting diversity on the basis of consensual and participatory democracy.

The various fundamental freedoms which underlie and which breathe life into any democratic political system are being fully exercised. The freedom of expression of the private press, which gives no quarter in its criticism of the action of the Government, as well as the burgeoning of associations of civil society, particularly those dealing with human rights, young people and women, bears witness to the political determination of the Government of Chad to promote a culture of democracy.

In this connection, particular attention should be paid to strengthening the role of women in public life, as well as the rights of and the protection of children.

Likewise, through the establishment of a supreme court, a constitutional council and a superior council of judges, the final touches have been put on the judicial institutions that underpin our democratic system. Furthermore, I am pleased to recall that the first multi-party elections took place in Chad in 1996 in a climate of calm and transparency, as the international observers noted. The next elections will take place in six months. In general, the political authorities in Chad are doing all they can to ensure their success.

I would therefore like to emphasize from this rostrum that Chad's attachment to pluralistic democracy cannot be unseated, because the people of Chad as a whole are profoundly convinced that this is the only way — indeed their unique opportunity — to improve their living conditions. The most recent meetings in Syrte, Libya, and the various declarations made by Chadian political actors are all encouraging signs that, as we would like, this attachment is firm. In all events, the Government of Chad welcomes these new arrangements, which are to be seen as part and parcel of the policy of outreach that has been advocated by His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby, the President of the Republic of Chad.

After gaining this hard-won peace and this firm attachment to democracy, the Government of Chad quite naturally then proceeded — with the support of international institutions and Chad's bilateral partners — to tackle the question of economic and social development. A genuine plan to fight poverty has been created. This plan includes the elaboration of a national strategy for the reduction of poverty. This strategy has been further strengthened by the fact that the objectives of poverty reduction and economic growth during the 2000-2002 period have been made part of the major, high-priority social and sectoral programmes that were adopted at the Geneva IV round table on the development of Chad.

Part of this struggle against poverty is the struggle that the people of Chad have waged to complete the project for the extraction and export of its oil. This success was achieved thanks to the determination of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby — but also thanks to unflagging support of the Bretton Woods institutions and of friends and other partners of Chad. Here we would like these supporters to know that the Government and people of the Republic of Chad recognize and are grateful for their assistance.

Chad nevertheless does not see its development — and even less its security and stability — in an isolated fashion. Therefore Chad is doing everything possible to make its contribution to creating a climate of peace and prosperity in Africa — particularly in Central Africa. The subregion of Central Africa — despite its immense potential, and perhaps because of this immense potential, I might add — now appears to be the region of upheaval par excellence, a region characterized by armed conflicts and crises of all sorts. Undoubtedly some hotbeds of tension have been slaked. This is true of the Central African Republic and of the Republic of the Congo, which are gradually regaining their stability. But this stability remains fragile. The international community therefore must help these countries to consolidate this peace by actions in support of reconstruction and assistance.

Two other conflicts, unfortunately, persist and also dangerously threaten the subregion. One of these is the conflict occurring in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the belligerents' failure to respect the Lusaka Agreement has unfortunately resulted in exacerbating the rivalries among the foreign forces in the Congolese territory, further complicating the situation and holding up the effective implementation of that Agreement.

As far as the Angolan conflict is concerned, it has certainly become even more complex because of its duration, the resources that nurture it and all the

international complicity that Mr. Jonas Savimbi has taken advantage of. But we must support the efforts of the legitimate and legal Government of Angola, as well as the efforts of the international community, so that this long-suffering people can recover the peace and tranquillity that they have not known since they acceded to independence.

In the framework of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, the States of this subregion have not remained inactive. They are devoting themselves to exploring ways and means of establishing peace and tranquillity through measures designed first and foremost to create trust among themselves.

The first of these steps is the possibility offered by the periodic meetings of the Committee. These provide an opportunity for political dialogue in the interest of preventive diplomacy. For having created this Committee, the Security Council is deserving of our gratitude.

Furthermore, structures and mechanisms to promote peace and stability are gradually being established. Among others, we might note the establishment of an early-warning mechanism in Libreville and of the subregional centre for human rights and democracy in Yaoundé. The creation of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa is under way with the signing, by the heads of State or Government, on 24 February at Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, of the protocol regarding this Council and the mutual assistance pact.

In the area of security there is a plan to organize a joint military exercise for the peacekeeping operations of the armed forces of the States of the subregion. As for the other contributor to instability — the proliferation of small arms and light weapons — the member States held a subregional conference on this topic in N'Djamena in October 1999. A number of measures were advocated; among them, we might mention the project of "arms for development", which was initiated by Canada and certain donor countries — a project that is intended to set up micro-projects to help those who turn in their arms. For the time being this project involves the areas along the borders of Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Chad. In this connection, a mission of evaluation visited the countries concerned in July 2000. The initiative is only at the conceptual stage, but it is to be hoped that it will take concrete form as soon as possible. I would therefore like to make an appeal to the other partners to join with Canada in order to broaden the scope of these projects to include the entire subregion.

Instability and insecurity in Central Africa are also among the major causes of refugee flows, a phenomenon that has spared no State. Aware as we are of the negative effects of this phenomenon, member States took this matter up during a conference that was held last August in Bujumbura. The relevant conclusions of this conference deserve to be supported.

The political situations in other subregions of the African continent also concern us. Certainly there has been a definite improvement with the consolidation of democratic institutions, good governance and respect for the fundamental rights of the African people. Nevertheless, several crises are persisting and must be a subject of concern for the entire international community. Thus in West Africa, Sierra Leone has not yet achieved peace, despite the commitments entered into by the parties to the conflict. Chad, for its part, gives its total support to the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations to seek peace in this embattled country. Likewise, we have every confidence in ECOWAS to smooth out the difficulties between Liberia and Guinea.

With regard to the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, His Excellency President Idriss Deby has personally dealt with this matter as current President of the Community of the Sahel and Saharan States by setting up a good offices mission to the leaders of the two fraternal countries, in support of the mediation by the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

The Government of Chad is very pleased to see that the two parties have finally reached a peace agreement. We encourage them to respect their individual commitments in order to bring lasting peace to this part of the African continent.

Regarding the Somali crisis, Chad welcomes the fact that the people of Somalia have awakened to their destiny through the recent conference of national reconciliation which was held in Alta, Djibouti, thus demonstrating courage and imagination in their determination to endow their countries with republican institutions. The international community must help them and encourage them to build further on this initiative in order to reach total and just peace.

The presence here of a delegation bearing the name of the Republic of Somalia, whose seat has been vacant for almost 10 years now, is a matter of pride and satisfaction for the friends and the partners of this fraternal people.

It is an example that should edify our brothers of the Comoros and Burundi.

We should also congratulate the Government of Djibouti for their contribution and devotion to the cause of peace in the subregion.

We believe it is time to lift completely the embargo against the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, because it is no longer justified and arbitrarily penalizes the fraternal Libyan people and, indeed, beyond them the entire subregion.

Chad has not lost sight of the crisis situations prevailing in other parts of the world.

In the Middle East, it is following with interest the negotiations underway between the Palestinian and Israeli authorities and believes that the time for the peace of the worthy has now come. The parties to the conflict should seize this historic opportunity and, as President Clinton said: the world should help them to take the risk of embarking on peace.

In Iraq, Chad believes it is urgent to put an end to the embargo whose consequences have been so disastrous for the civilian population, which is suffering the atrocious evils resulting from this unjust decision. Quite clearly any solution should also cover the very pertinent matter of the prisoners from Kuwait and other countries.

The Korean peninsula is showing encouraging signs of the two fraternal countries drawing closer to each other. The historic inter-Korean Summit, which took place between the leaders of these countries last June, has laid the foundation for trusting relationships that are so central for any dialogue.

The international community should encourage both of these countries to press on in order to eventually sign a peace agreement which would pave the way to peaceful coexistence.

The inter-Korean dialogue might also arouse some interest on the part of the Taiwan Strait where tension unfortunately continues to be abnormally high. Whereas economic and trade relations between the two countries are being developed on a regular basis, political relations are non-existent, despite the fact that on both sides of the Strait semi-official structures have been set up which serve as channels of communication between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China, Taiwan.

Both parties should show political determination and imagination in exploring ways and means of reducing tension and opening a genuine dialogue. In all events, the international community is duty bound to reconsider the whole question of admitting the Republic of China, Taiwan to membership of our Organization, particularly in light of the weight and the importance of the economic role it plays internationally and the fact that it is so closely involved in actions for development and the reduction of poverty.

For its part, the Government of Chad supports the request by the Republic of China, Taiwan, to seek membership in the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

I could not conclude my remarks without referring to other ills which undermine and sap all the development efforts of countries like mine. These ills include indebtedness, protectionist measures in the markets of the northern countries, deterioration in the terms of trade and various kinds of trafficking.

Those countries which hold the key to the solutions to all these ills, particularly the northern countries, must go beyond simple declarations of intention and take concrete steps to relieve countries from the burden of indebtedness, to throw open their markets and to pay a fair price for our exports.

As if this were not enough, another evil which is even more insidious and devastating, has made our task even more difficult. The prospects for solution are remote indeed and it is to be feared that this will reduce to nothing our hopes to relieve our peoples of poverty. I refer to the HIV/AIDS pandemic which brings death and bereavement to families on a daily basis.

Not only is it a burden for our meagre financial resources, but also on our human resources, particularly young people who are the spearhead of our nation.

We have the collective responsibility to effectively mobilize ways and means to conquer this scourge which defies the entire international community as a time when there is so much technological and scientific progress being made.

In the light of all these challenges, Chad believes that its development should also benefit from the political and economic integration of Africa, which is an important and determinant dimension of this global village. Therefore we would welcome and salute the major political acts which have been taken by the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on 12 July in Lomé. I refer to the adoption of the Constituent Act of the African Union.

This major historic event, which is the result of a collective commitment on the part of the African peoples, is a responsible reply on the part of today's Africa to meet the number of challenges of the twenty-first century by means of political, economic and social integration.

The African Union will create the necessary conditions for genuine partnership in irreversible globalization, but a globalization that would not be synonymous with exclusion and the dictatorship of the marketplace. This globalization, we believe, should be synonymous with sharing and openness. It should have a human face or it will not exist at all.

But none of this can be achieved without further democratization of the United Nations starting with an enlargement of the Security Council so that it can be more effective and, particularly, more legitimate.

In other words, it is in our interest — in the interest of us all — that the Security Council be more representative of the international community in whose name it claims to act. What we are referring to here is the credibility of its decisions which, unfortunately, have long been used against the weaker with its policy of double standards.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Shakerian (Islamic Republic of Iran): This morning the Israeli delegation raised some baseless accusations against my country.

Iran is among those Middle Eastern countries which have joined the most basic international instruments in effect in the disarmament field. My Government is a full party to the main pillars of international disarmament instruments such as the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and is a signatory State to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Despite numerous calls from the international community, Israel refuses to accede to those agreements, and is continuing with its clandestine programmes to develop and produce several kinds of weapons of mass destruction. Israel remains the only non-party to the NPT in the Middle East and, at the same time, its nuclear programme and unsafeguarded facilities continue to be an alarming fact that menace peace and stability in the Middle East.

Mrs. Barghouti (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): This morning, we heard the statement by the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel. Needless to say, his statement was, from our point of view, full of historical and political fallacies, especially as regards Al-Quds, the Palestinian refugees and the peace process in the Middle East. However, my delegation will have the opportunity to reply and to clarify the facts in the statement that Palestine will make in the plenary meeting tomorrow morning.

The meeting rose at 7.05 p.m.